OLD DESIGNS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: ART, INNOVATION AND CULTURAL CONTINUITY IN KYRGYZSTAN

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The Western world’s obsession with authenticity in the developing world has been the subject of countless discussions in anthropology, and many anthropologists now conclude that there is no single, bounded, continuous past or tradition from which authenticity can be judged. Instead, traditions are part of the structure within which individuals negotiate their identities, and the practices that are canonized as traditions shift and warp over time as the past is called upon to serve different needs in the present.

After centuries of making them for personal use, Kyrgyz women began making felt carpets called shyrdaks for sale after Kyrgyzstan’s independence in 1991. Based on three months of field research undertaken in 2004, this paper compares shyrdaks made for tourists and contemporary shyrdaks made for women’s homes to heirloom shyrdaks made before independence, to explore how tourism has affected carpet construction and motifs. Interviews were carried out to determine to what degree learning and production processes have changed to meet market demands. While many believe that the sale of
traditional arts has a corrupting influence, my research supports the conclusion that
tourism can help preserve the art of traditional shyrdak making.
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Kyrgyz is written using the Cyrillic alphabet, and includes some phonemes not found in either Russian or English. English spellings of Kyrgyz words typically use Russian transliteration techniques, which do not reflect the differences in pronunciation between Russian and Kyrgyz. While using the common spellings of most place names (e.g. Issyk Kul), I have instituted standardized spellings for the Kyrgyz terms used.

I have represented the vowels О and О as “o” in English, because they both represent mid, rounded vowels. The vowels У and Ы are both high, rounded vowels, and are therefore represented with “u.” The vowel Ы is a high, back unrounded vowel, and I represent it with a “y” in English, as is consistent with the common English spelling of “Kyrgyz.” The true pronunciation can be duplicated by saying “uuh” with the teeth clenched and the lips held wide, as if in a smile. However, in English it is often replaced with a schwa, making “Kurgiz” the most accurate English pronunciation of Kyrgyz.

Double vowels, (e.g. ЭЭ and УУ) are pronounced as drawn-out long vowels and I follow Bunn (1996) in writing these with an apostrophe. The words je’ek and ju’un are, therefore, pronounced “Jake” and “June,” but with the vowel held a little longer than usual. The letter Ы is a vowel modifier, and is represented as an “i” in English (e.g. Chii, which rhymes with spree). The letter Ж is an unvoiced alveo-palatal in Kyrgyz, and therefore I prefer to use “j” instead of the “dj” often used in the English transliteration of Russian.

**English pronunciation of Kyrgyz vowels**

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

“If the value systems which accompanied the art have eroded and the art becomes mainly a resource for getting cash through purchases by outsiders… will the traditional art continue?”

--Edgerly, John E., 1982, *Surviving Traditional Art of Melanesia*

“No one bit of behavior can be said to have ultimate authenticity…All the bits of behavior are models: models of previous bits and models for subsequent ones.”

-- Hanson, Allan, 1989, *The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic*

These two epigraphs demonstrate the current gap between popular and academic understandings of culture, tradition and authenticity. While Edgerly’s question may appear to many anthropologists today as naïve and somewhat misguided, it is the perspective commonly held by the lay public: money corrupts art; Western tourist money corrupts traditional, non-Western art absolutely. The Western world’s obsession with authenticity in the developing world has been the subject of countless discussions in anthropology, and many anthropologists now conclude that there is no single, bounded, continuous past or tradition from which authenticity can be judged. Instead, traditions are part of the structure within which individuals negotiate their identities, and the practices that are canonized as traditions shift and warp over time as the past is called upon to serve different needs in the present. However, artists in developing countries
selling their goods to tourists do not typically work with these concepts. Instead, they must negotiate the sometimes contradictory desires of their customers in order to make a sale, constantly treading the fine line between tradition and innovation. While these artists are responding to the needs of the market to ensure themselves a livelihood, they must also make decisions regarding their personal use of traditional arts.

My research took place in the town of Ak To’o¹ in Naryn Oblast, Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2004. Here I studied the kinds of changes that are being made for the sake of the tourism industry to Kyrgyz felt carpets known as shyrdaks. I also examined how these changes were or were not affecting women’s personal design preferences. In this paper, I apply the concepts of invention of tradition to the changes being made to shyrdaks. My approach is twofold: first, I demonstrate that the changes apparent in shyrdaks being made for the market do not represent the loss of knowledge among shyrdak makers in Kyrgyzstan; second, I acknowledge that shyrdak making is a dynamic set of practices that continue to be modified to meet the present needs of the women who make them.

¹ This and all names to follow are fictional unless otherwise noted.
CHAPTER TWO
THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ART

Salvage Anthropology and Tourist Art

The anthropology of art has its roots in the collections of artifacts and “primitive art” taken from Africa and the Pacific under colonialism. “Salvage anthropology” was the paradigm under which many of these collections took place, guided by the assumption that “primitive” cultures were traditional and unchanging before European contact. After contact, these cultures were expected to disappear rapidly and inevitably as a result of cultural assimilation and progress. This required anthropologists to collect as much of the art and material culture available as possible before it was gone, in order to ensure its preservation in their safekeeping. This view of non-Western art, which equated change with cultural loss, was popular through the 1960s and 1970s, and even into the early 1980s in some cases (Edgerly 1982, Nkunika 1979, Zerner 1982).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some anthropologists began studying what they termed “airport” or “tourist art.” These were forms of “primitive” art that were being produced for sale to outsiders. Nelson H. H. Graburn’s edited volume Ethnic and Tourist Arts (1976a) is one of the major milestones in the study of tourist art. Graburn defines several different categories of arts by their sources and intended audience, and these categories are useful for thinking about how cultural change is reflected in the arts of a society (see Figure 1.1). Before this publication, the forms of art that Graburn (1976a) termed Functional Traditional and Commercial Fine were both considered “authentic” forms of art that needed to be preserved; Reintegrated and Souvenir Novelty arts were
Anthropologists have come to very different understandings of the relationships between art, innovation, and cultural change than that held by the salvage anthropologists of the past.

### Authenticity and Tradition

A major theme of Graburn’s 1976 book, and of much early study of the anthropology of art, is authenticity. An “authentic” object is perceived as “genuine” or “real” (rather than a fake, copy, or replica), represents the continuation of “age-old” cultural practices, and typically must not being “tainted” by the influence of modern Western culture. The central paradox of the authenticity debate is the tension formed by contradictory definitions of “traditional” and “Western” art. Western art is typically defined as the unique product of an individual artist, while traditional art is conceived of as one example of an ideal cultural “type” that is produced within narrow limits of stylistic and formal variation. Western buyers’ concerns regarding authenticity, reproductions and mass-production mean that artists are forced to tread a very narrow
line. Their art objects must be similar enough to a recognized style to be considered authentic extensions of that tradition, but they must have enough variation from each other to not be considered copies.

Early discussions of authenticity assumed that art made for tourists could never be fully authentic, if only because its production and consumption had been removed from the original cultural context (Blackman 1981, Edgerly 1982, Graburn 1978, 1995, M’Closkey 2002, Niessen 1999, Nkunika 1979, Steiner 1991, 1992, 1994). Authenticity is a quality assigned to “traditional” objects and often judged by consumers rather than the producers, particularly in the context of the sale of non-Western art. When Western buyers act as the arbiters of authenticity, the producers of these arts may adopt Western-derived categories in their own communities (Blackman 1981, Nkunika 1979, Steiner 1991, 1994). Artists may use these definitions of the authentic as a standard against which to judge each other’s work, or they may manipulate and “doctor” their products to tap into Westerners’ perceptions of authenticity so that they can maximize their profit. Blackman (1981) noted how makers of Northwest Coast American Indian art judged the authenticity of prints based on the “traditional” style and subject matter of the design, and how different groups criticized each other’s work based on this definition of authenticity. Whites have usually defined “traditional” Indian culture and practices in reference to contact with Europeans, stemming from those same assumptions that only pre-contact art can be “pure,” and this definition appears to have been accepted by the Northwest Coast community of artists. In contrast, however, Steiner (1991) discussed how new pieces of African art were stained or distressed to allow them to pass for older, pre-contact pieces, since these older pieces were considered more authentic and therefore fetched higher
prices. In this case, African artists are exploiting Western perceptions of authenticity for their own gain, rather than internalizing outsider’s definitions of the authentic. In both cases, however, Western definitions are not challenged by the art producers.

While in most cases the authenticity of a traditional practice is judged by scholars and others based on historical precedent (i.e. historical, ethnographic, and/or archaeological evidence [Keesing 1989:19]), some authors have described situations where forms of art that have no historical precedent are perceived as authentic by Western buyers (Graburn 1978, McGuckin 1997, Romalis 1983). Graburn (1978) surveyed non-Indian attendees of a Canadian art conference regarding their responses to two displays of art produced by American Indian groups. The first was a display of the commercial art form known as Cree Craft, which were traditional Cree utensils made from light-colored wood and painted with abstract Cree motifs. The second display was of Canadian Inuit stone carvings, a form of carving introduced to the Inuit by government programs designed to improve income opportunities. The responses to the Cree Craft display were mostly negative and focused on the fact that the utensils had never been used, and that they were made exclusively for sale. The responses to the Inuit carvings were mostly positive and focused on the connection of the Inuit to their environment that was apparent from the subject matter of their carvings, predominantly animals and hunting scenes. Graburn concluded that the Cree Craft were judged inauthentic because they did not meet the viewers’ expectations of what American Indian utensils “should” look like, whereas the Inuit carvings reinforced a message of connectedness to the environment that is consistent with white perceptions of American Indian groups. Because the carvings met the viewers’ expectations, their authenticity was not challenged
either by the fact that they were also made for sale or the fact that this art form was introduced by non-Inuits, two facts that were clearly stated alongside both displays.

Christopher Steiner (1999) has also argued that, both in the pre-modern past and in modern times, art gains authenticity in certain circumstances through duplication. He shows that certain images serve as signifiers of a concept, and that their repetition is what allows them to achieve authentic status. This appears to be true of the Northwest Coast prints studied by Blackman (1981), whose authenticity are judged by their similarity to other prints, rather than by their individuality. These are all exceptions to the usual understanding of authenticity, and help to demonstrate that it is a Western cultural construct.

Authors began in the 1980s to study the ways in which the sale of art changes the values and meanings embodied in that art. Arjun Appadurai’s edited volume, The Social Life of Things (1986), is another pivotal volume in the study of the anthropology of art. In his introduction, Appadurai emphasizes the need to focus on the objects that are moving from one society to another through the sale of art, rather than focusing on the buyer and seller. In the same volume, Kopytoff’s piece presents the “biography of things” approach, where individual objects are tracked as they transition from being singular, possibly sacred, objects, to commodities as they enter the transaction process and are sold, and then back to singularities that are considered unique and “priceless” artifacts by their new owners. The focus for both authors is what these objects come to represent for their makers and purchasers, as well as the social functions that they perform for their Western owners. This approach to tourist art has lead to a number of authors following objects as they move across cultural boundaries (e.g. Wood 2000) as
well as studies of the differing meanings imbued in these objects by makers and buyers (e.g. Steiner 1991, Straight 2002, Willink and Zalbrod 1996).

Later collections, such as Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner’s edited volume *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (1999) and Fred R. Myers’ edited volume *The Empire of Things* (2001) have continued to add to the literature on art and commodification, identity and meaning. Carol Ivory’s chapter in *Unpacking Culture* is typical of the more nuanced current understanding of “traditional” and “tourist” arts. Ivory (1999) provides a history of the arts of the Marquesas, discussing the interplay between Marquesans and outsiders, how trade to foreigners affected art forms in the past, and how tourism and a cultural revival on the islands are acting synergistically upon one another today. She points to shifting historical perceptions of authenticity as held by previous anthropologists, but includes all forms of arts, both commodity and non-commodity, as integral examples of Marquesan aesthetic tradition.

A challenge to the concept of authenticity is the literature surrounding the invention of tradition (e.g. Briggs 1996, Handler and Linnekin 1984, Hanson 1989, Jolly 1992, Keesing 1989, Thomas 1992). These authors have explored how tradition is defined in the many cultural revival movements of the Pacific Islands and elsewhere, and in some cases how closely these traditions are tied to historical practices. Early authors were still working within the older authenticity paradigm. Keesing states that, “The ancestral ways of life being evoked rhetorically may bear little relation to those documented historically, recorded ethnographically, and reconstructed archaeologically” (1989:19). Hanson (1989) noted that some practices adopted by cultural revivals in the
Pacific were drawn from the discredited hypotheses of Western scholars. However, while Keesing and Hanson emphasized the division between “genuine” and “invented” traditions, many authors have since rejected this division. They argue that traditions that existed before Western contact are in no way more “authentic” than traditions with roots in practices either adopted from European or missionary contact, or created in reaction to the colonial presence. Handler and Linnekin (1984), for example, point out that all traditions are constituted in the present from past practices, and therefore even the most ancient traditions are invented anew each time they are practiced. They reject the idea that “genuine” cultures are unselfconscious in their actions, and conclude that the division of traditions into “spurious” and “genuine” is fallacious. Handler and Linnekin (1984) demonstrate that all cultures are both flexible in their expressions of “traditional” practice and self-reflexive when using these practices to shape individual and group identity.

In another account, Gosden and Knowles (2001) describe the historical situation in colonial New Britain, where both Europeans and Melanesians were fascinated with the objects owned by the other. They characterize European collecting of Melanesian artifacts as “a form of cargo cult” (Gosden and Knowles 2001:8). They acknowledge that European collecting had an impact on the art of the area, but they do not frame the changes that took place in terms of assimilation or the loss of “genuine” traditions. They do allude to a process whereby “the traditional” may have come to be standardized through contact as the expectations of white collectors helped to define and reinforce what would be called “traditional” (Gosden and Knowles 2001:17). However, Gosden and Knowles do not see the changes that took place in Melanesian art and artifact
production as a result of colonialism as restrictive or damaging overall. Instead, they state that the purchase of art by outsiders simply provided the local people an extra possibility when deciding for what purpose a particular art object was made (Gosden and Knowles 2001:9).

**Culture as Community**

The term community of practice was introduced by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in their book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991). While there is a wealth of literature on the topic, the limited scope of this study makes it impossible to cover in depth here. Instead, a brief overview will have to suffice. The community of practice was originally conceived of as a model for learning based on the concept of apprenticeship, rather than the more pervasive model of classroom learning. It was readily adopted in studies of language and gender, as it is consistent with the theory of speech communities. I believe that community of practice is a concept that can be used to understand a wide array of cultural groups and subgroups, including art production communities.

Lave and Wenger discuss apprenticeship as “a form of producing knowledgably skilled persons” (1991:62), and I believe that this assessment of learning is consistent with Hanson’s (1989) view of cultural learning. Hanson states that:

Any conventional act … is learned by observing how other people do it, modeling one’s own behavior on that, and being assured that it is done properly (or alerted that it is not) by the reactions of other people to the behavior….Moreover, each person is a teacher as well as a learner in the process, because his or her behavior
also serves as a model upon which other people construct their behavior (see Bourdieu 1977; Hanson and Hanson 1981). [1989:898]

This is very similar to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) descriptions of apprenticeship learning in their examples of Yucatec Mayan midwives and “nondrinking alcoholics” in Alcoholics Anonymous. A similar process is described in the quotes from Cain (n.d. at the time) regarding how women and men learn to become members of Alcoholics Anonymous. They describe a process whereby new members are asked to share their life story. They are provided models through the polished stories of other members, and are encouraged to begin crafting their own stories and sharing them with the group. As Lave and Wenger describe it, feedback from the group regarding the appropriateness of the storytelling is subtle but effective:

Usually, unless the interpretation runs counter to A. A. beliefs, the speaker is not corrected. Rather, other speakers will take appropriate parts of the newcomer’s comments, and build on this in their own comments,…while ignoring the inappropriate parts of the newcomer’s story. [1991:82-3]

This process follows closely the description provided by Hanson, where acts are modeled on the previous acts of others, and appropriateness is determined based on their reactions.

In this way, we could consider each culture as a distinct community of practice, where children and youth are “apprentices” to their elders, who act as “masters.” Certainly, smaller and more specialized communities of practice will be nested within the larger community, in the same way that subcultures divide larger cultural groups. For instance, art production communities include specialized knowledge not shared with the wider culture, and membership in these communities will not necessarily begin
automatically in childhood. However, the processes of learning to be Kyrgyz and
learning to be a Kyrgyz shyrdaq maker follow the same steps, as individuals move from
peripheral to central member status.

Seeing culture in this light allows for changes over time. Because mastery of
cultural practice is determined by the community, and because membership is constantly
and cyclically renewing itself, this model allows for the adaptation of older forms of
practice to current circumstances. As long as the community agrees on the legitimacy of
a cultural practice, it is authentic. This view also dissolves the apparent paradox of
invented traditions, as each generation of masters determines collectively what is
legitimate practice and what is not, without necessarily requiring that current practice be
identical to past practices. To quote Hanson again, “No one bit of behavior can be said to
have ultimate authenticity…All the bits of behavior are models: models of previous bits
and models for subsequent ones” (1989:898). It is from this perspective that I will be
studying the issues of cultural change and continuity among the felt carpets being made
both for domestic use and for sale in Kyrgyzstan.

Art in Central Asia

Up to this point, most research on tourist art has been done in either colonial,
post-colonial, or “Fourth World” minority societies. Societies of these kinds all exist
within the sphere of a dominant culture, and it is the tension between the minority
culture’s own practices and social pressures to assimilate to the dominant culture that acts
as the driving force behind cultural preservation and change. While many authors have
drawn parallels between colonialism and the Soviet Union, and between post-colonialism
and post-socialism (e.g. Dunn and Dunn 1967, Gammer 2000), few English speaking scholars have studied art and cultural change in the former USSR. I believe that by studying the kinds of changes taking place in Kyrgyzstan’s art as a result of the influence of tourism, which has been present for just over 10 years, it will be possible to explore the intersection of tradition and innovation.

My research is designed to ask whether *shyrdak*-making practices are being preserved, rather than lost, in Kyrgyzstan, and to determine how the community of *shyrdak* makers is changing over time. By focusing on cultural preservation and loss, it may appear at first that I am in agreement with the position that tradition and innovation oppose one another. However, I would argue that traditions are the continuation of past practice and are therefore constantly reshaped for the needs of the present, which makes innovation an integral part of the continuance of tradition.
CHAPTER THREE
CULTURAL CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Commodification and Cultural Change

Many authors have recognized that, as various groups’ historical subsistence bases erode due to the influence of capitalism and the world market, the sale of art becomes an important means of acquiring cash (Anderson 2002, Bunn 1996, Colloredo-Mansfeld 1994, Davis 1999, Edgerly 1982, Graburn 1976b, M’Closkey 2002, McGuckin 1997, Nash 2000, Niessen 1999, Rasmussen 1995, Steiner 1992, Straight 2002). Graburn (1976b) clearly sees the development of Canadian Inuit carving and printmaking as a result of the decline in hunting as a subsistence strategy among the Inuit, and an increase in the need/desire for cash. Graburn argues that, as Inuit dependence on a market economy emerged in the 1960s, becoming an artist was preferable culturally, socially and financially to performing the kinds of manual labor jobs that were the alternative means available to earn a wage. Kathy M’Closkey (2002), in turn, describes the difficult subsistence conditions that Navajo families had to endure after being confined to a reservation, and how this lead to the sale of Navajo blankets to Anglo traders. Susan J. Rasmussen (1995) and Elizabeth A. Davis (1999) each write about the relationship between Tuareg nobles and silversmiths, and how changes in the economy caused the nobles, who still relied on caravan and camel trade for their income, to become impoverished relative to their silversmith clients, who could sell their goods to urban expatriates at high prices. Eventually, as they continued to lose income due to the decreasing importance of caravan trade, Tuareg nobles began producing paintings, a form
of art previously absent from their cultural practice, for sale to expatriates (Davis 1999). And Stephanie Bunn (1996) indicates that it is the change to a market economy, brought about by Kyrgyzstan’s sudden independence from the Soviet Union in the 1990s, that has caused women to begin making felt carpets for tourists.

One result of the introduction of art as a commodity is the need to modify production processes to meet the new demand (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002, Davis 1999, Hammond 1986, McGuckin 1997, Wilkinson-Weber 1999). Many forms of indigenous arts are produced individually and in a domestic setting, where the completion of a particular object is delayed by the need to dedicate time to other domestic tasks. When these objects begin to be sold, however, the demand for large numbers of art objects to be produced in a short time span typically results in a transition to larger, specialized production facilities and the introduction of wage labor.

Several examples of this kind of transition are documented. Rudolph Colloredo-Mansfeld (2002) describes the competition between weaving businesses in the Andes to maintain skilled staff. In Otavolo, there is a historical cultural practice involving work groups based on social connections and paid in food. Now, however, business owners employ groups of weavers and pay them wages. Eric McGuckin describes the transition of Tibetan carpets from a domestically-made “folk craft” to an industry that generates huge revenues for Tibetan refugees in Nepal (1997:294-295). The first small carpet-weaving site was started by aid workers in a refugee camp to bring income to its rural residents, who had to be paid a piece rate instead of a daily wage in order to ensure the unaccustomed speed and quality of production desired by their new employers.
In contrast to these examples, Joyce D. Hammond (1986) describes the changes from group to individual quilt production in Hawaii. Hawaiian quilts were made historically by groups of women, a practice derived from the women’s former work groups that produced *kapa* cloth. However, a woman is now more likely to make quilts that she intends to sell by herself, in order to maximize her profits. This transition from communal to individual production is still driven, however, by a desire to maximize profits within the market system.

Another change that is associated with commodification of arts for tourists is the amount of innovation found in arts marketed to tourists when compared to those made previously. Most authors observe that by freeing arts from their previous cultural and possibly ceremonial contexts, the sale of art allows for an increase in innovations (Anderson 2002, Blackman 1983, Coloredo-Mansfeld 2002b, Davis 1999, Graburn 1982, 1983, Niessen 1999, Nkunika 1979, Rasmussen 1995, Romalis 1983). For example, Niessen (1999) discusses the wide range and cyclical changes found in designs of Batak cloth produced for fashion when compared to the conservatism and consistency displayed in the cloths made for ceremonial purposes, and Sheila Romalis (1983) notes that new creatures not mentioned in the traditional myths are being invented by Inuit carvers in Greenland who sell these figures to non-Greenlanders. In Graburn’s (1976) classification of arts (see Figure 1.1), only two of the six categories he defined derive from forms of art that existed before European contact, indicating the degree to which innovations can occur when art begins to be sold.

In other cases, however, authors note that innovations in form and design seem to decrease with commodification (Bunn 1996, Edgerly 1982, Gosden and Knowles 2001,
Graburn 1979, Nkunika 1979). As mentioned previously, Gosden and Knowles hypothesize that in New Guinea the definition of “traditional” provided by white collectors may have created a new, more restricted standard by which future art was judged by colonial buyers. Edgerly’s (1982) description of the standardization which occurred in Baining art in Melanesia suggests a second possibility: the need to signal Baining identity in the context of colonial pressure to assimilate. Edgerly mentions that new motifs, such as playing card designs, were being incorporated into traditional arts of the area, but he found that the region with the most contact with Western culture had the least innovation in its art. This implies that innovation was inhibited, possibly due to a need to employ unambiguous symbols of Baining ethnicity in a culturally-mixed context. Graburn, however, provides a third reason for the standardization of tourist art: “mass production and uniformity… occurs when the decision has been made in favor of high volume to minimize the initial cost” (1979:357). It is possible that, in some cases, all three of these pressures have caused a reduction in the stylistic variation of local art forms to occur.

Often, buyer preferences are directly responsible for the changes that take place. Eric McGuckin (1997) has documented the modification of Tibetan knotted carpets for tourists. He discusses the ways in which concepts of authenticity held by buyers can force handicrafts producers to modify their products to meet these preconceived notions. Consumer preferences are for abstract or geometric designs, often reminiscent of American Indian designs, which are associated with an “ethnic” look (McGuckin 1997:303). In addition, consumers prefer “natural” vegetable dyes, and large numbers of rugs are produced in accordance with these demands (McGuckin 1997:303). As
McGuckin points out, “since many Tibetans preferred chemical dyes even before exile, this indigenous cultural production has been altered to meet criteria of authenticity partially defined by outside consumers” (McGuckin 1997:303).

Commodity shyrdak makers in Kyrgyzstan are also dealing with this preference for natural plant dyes. In 2004, a souvenir shop opened in Bishkek that sells only products made with natural plant dyes. This fact was related to me by every expatriate who mentioned the store, underlining the attraction that natural dyes have for non-Kyrgyz consumers. While we know that plant dyes were used in the past for both shyrdaks and pile carpets (Akmoldoeva 2002), chemical dyes have been used and preferred by Kyrgyz women since the late nineteenth century (Bunn 1996:79). Recently, natural dye specialists have been brought to Kyrgyzstan to teach women how to use natural dyes in order to respond to this preference (Kyrgyz Style, n.d.). At one week-long conference, all of the workshop participants were experienced felt makers, but few had any knowledge of local dye plants, because these kinds of dyes are no longer used in domestic production (Kyrgyz Style, n.d.). In what appears to be an attempt to cater to these preferences for “natural” materials, the majority of shyrdaks made for tourists use contrasting colors of undyed wool as a substitute. The slow adoption of natural dyes and the inclusion of completely undyed shyrdaks reflects the need for Kyrgyz shyrdak makers to respond to consumer preferences.

In each of these circumstances, changes have been adopted to improve the marketability of the arts being produced. However, in some circumstances, artists are able to maintain their own cultural practices despite pressure from buyers.
Mechanisms for Cultural Continuity

There is evidence cross-culturally that even when individuals adopt new designs and production processes to meet market demands, a separate line of production that adheres to historical preferences can be maintained. In his article, McGuckin demonstrates how Tibetan exiles in Nepal have managed to preserve their own carpet preferences alongside production for export. As mentioned above, Tibetans typically prefer the bright colors produced by chemical dyes over more neutral natural dyes, but they are also likely to choose figurative motifs over abstract ones, and they tend to use their carpets as seats rather than floor coverings or wall hangings (McGuckin 1997). Despite having made many changes to the carpets made for export, Tibetans are still able to make some carpets to their own specifications for local consumption. As McGuckin states:

The case of Tibetan carpets illustrates that mass-produced tourist arts can simultaneously remain mundane functional objects for their community of origin … even as these arts are radically altered by technical innovations and the demands of external consumers. [1997:308]

Susan J. Rasmussen (1995) also alludes to separate lines of production being maintained by Tuareg silversmiths in Niger. She states that Western expatriates who purchase new jewelry tend to prefer smaller, lighter pieces in pure silver metal to heavier pieces made with the silver-copper alloy, known as Maria Theresa silver, used in the past (1995:605). While silversmiths are willing to make jewelry of this type for sale, Rasmussen indicates that, “Tuareg consider the Maria Theresa silver ‘much more beautiful’ in appearance, and express more respect for the few expatriates who recognize this” (1995:605). And in
New Mexico, Anderson describes how the Tesuque Indians were able to “develop their own aesthetics and to create their own art tradition apart from and, in many ways, in spite of the dictates and definitions of the dominant culture” (2002:88). Each of these cases demonstrates the ability of minority cultures to resist assimilation by the dominant culture, as well as the ability of individuals to maintain diverse cultural practices.

Other authors demonstrate how the influence of tourism revitalizes the production of traditional arts whose practice was declining (Davis 1999, Krystal 2000, Little 2000, Niessen 1999, Salvador 1976, Zerner 1982). Krystal (2000) describes the positive impact that tourism funds have had on one moreria, an indigenous institution in Guatemala that provides costumes and performance assistance for Mayan dance companies. The management and ownership of morerias was passed down through families, but in some cases these organizations have run out of either money or interested heirs. In the community that Krystal studied, the local moreria was transformed into a community institution whose expressed purpose was cultural preservation. He asks the question:

Does tourism serve the purpose of revitalization or does revitalization serve the development of tourism?…Young Maya activists are motivated by their desire to see their traditions survive and their community prosper. Tourism is a tool to serve those ends. [2000:159]

The continued survival of the local moreria is based upon income from tourists and from government subsidies aimed at cultural revitalization. In this case, rather than being willing to compromise cultural practices in order to increase income, tourist dollars are used consciously to maintain and promote the continuation of cultural practice.
In some cases, it appears that the individuals who produce their art for sale to tourists do not see a contradiction between innovations for the market and the delineation of traditional art. Davis (1999) states that some Tuareg artisans in Niger feel that innovation and creativity, leading to rapid changes in art objects and motifs, can be understood as part of traditional Tuareg culture. And Niessen (1999) discusses women who have begun making traditional Batak textiles for wealthy locals and foreigners. The newer textiles are made with bright colors and follow the fashion trends, in contrast to the textiles made for ceremonial use. Some of the women who make these kinds of cloth are innovators, “inventing” new designs by combining or making variations on more well-known patterns. The Western view was that the older traditions were being displaced by the newer textiles, but Niessen discovered that there is a history of innovative designs, which come and go in a fashion cycle, while those designs which were classified as “traditional” are merely the designs that have stayed popular through time. Therefore, the innovative designs being labeled as “corrupted” are, in fact, part of a continuing historical tradition.
CHAPTER FOUR
KYRGYZ HISTORY

Political History

The Kyrgyz Republic, more commonly known as Kyrgyzstan, is located in Central Asia, surround by Kazakstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. Its total land area is approximately equal to the state of South Dakota, and it is nearly 95 percent mountainous. According to the 1998 census, approximately 52 percent of the 4.5 million inhabitants were ethnically Kyrgyz, while ethnic Russians and Uzbeks made up approximately 23 and 13 percent of the population, respectively (Tuttle 2001). Virtually all citizens speak Russian, as this was used as the “language of inter-ethnic communication” under the Soviet Union and is still used as the language of business, but the majority of ethnically Kyrgyz people speak the Kyrgyz language as well.

The Kyrgyz lived historically as pastoral nomads, subsisting primarily from their horses and sheep. Many sources (e.g. Anderson 1999) indicate that the ancestors of the
modern Kyrgyz moved from the upper Yenisey River basin in Siberia southward to their current geographical area in the Tien Shan mountains starting in the tenth century. By the seventeenth century, the Kyrgyz in the Tien Shans were ruled by the Mongol Oyrats of the Zhungarian Empire, who are remembered as the enemy hordes fought by the hero Manas in the eponymous Kyrgyz epic (Mayhew et. al 2000:24). The Oyrats were defeated by the Manchu of China in the middle of the eighteenth century, leaving the Kyrgyz subject to the Chinese. The Chinese largely left them to their nomadic ways, but by the end of the century the Kokand khanate, based in Uzbek territory to the south, began to vie for power in the area (Anderson 1999). The Kokands brought a stronger Muslim influence during this time period, although Islam was first introduced to the area in the 15th or 16th century (Anderson 1999). By 1865 the Russian Empire had defeated Tashkent, the center of Kokand rule, and were in control of the land occupied by the Kyrgyz (Anderson 1999).

Once Russia had control over this part of Central Asia, the tsar began sending Russian settlers into the area and granting them rights to farm Kyrgyz grazing land. Resentment over this policy, combined with a decree that “requisitioned” all Central Asian men into the Russian army to help with the war in Europe, caused a revolt against the Russians in 1916. This uprising resulted in an estimated 100-120,000 deaths, with an equal number fleeing to China, a loss of approximately one third of the total Kyrgyz population (Huskey 1995). The date 1916 is still commemorated with hillside memorials, especially in the Issyk-Kul region.

After the Soviets gained control of Russia in 1918, the Kyrgyz were incorporated into the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. There were subsequent
attempts to end the nomadic lifestyle of the Kyrgyz by the Soviet leadership in the 1920s and 1930s, which resulted in both large numbers of settled Kyrgyz, and in the infamous basmachi guerilla fighters who resisted Russian efforts at settlement. After several shifts in status, one part of the Turkestan SSR became the Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic in 1936 (Huskey 1995).

In 1991, the USSR dissolved and the Kyrgyz Republic (more commonly known as Kyrgyzstan) was suddenly an independent state. The planned economy of the Soviet Union had been designed to make the various republics interdependent, and the Kyrgyz SSR had mainly supplied irrigation water and some hydroelectric power to its neighbors, particularly Uzbekistan. Because the Kyrgyz SSR had little in the way of industry, its economy was far from self-sufficient, and without the Soviet Union’s support it virtually collapsed. While economic reforms were made quickly and the economy seemed to be stabilizing by 1997, the collapse of the Russian economy in 1998 caused another deep recession in Kyrgyzstan. From the onset of independence, international aid organizations from the US and Europe attempted to assist with economic growth and development in Kyrgyzstan, often funding Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as a way of getting aid money directly to the high-needs individuals. While there were NGOs involved in all areas, from environmental groups to economic assistance for pensioners, one kind of NGO formed in different parts of the country specialized in handicrafts sales and production. In addition, while Kyrgyzstan is one of the few countries in Central Asia endowed with few natural resources and no oil, it has a surplus of beautiful scenery and rugged mountains. Therefore, Kyrgyzstan turned to tourism as one way to boost the economy.
Soviet Legacy

Central Asia’s current borders were drawn during the time of Stalin’s control over the USSR, and his strategy of promoting ethnic in-fighting among the Central Asians as a means of maintaining control over the region is evident (Lubin et. al 1999). Not only were borders skewed with respect to the settlement patterns of various ethnic groups (incorporating, for instance, large numbers of Uzbek settlements within Kyrgyz borders, and vice-versa), but there are small “islands” of territory that belong to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, respectively, that are completely surrounded by Kyrgyz-held territories. Stalin’s borders have been maintained by these republics after independence from the USSR, inadvertently ensuring that ethnic conflict continues in the region.

The Soviet language policy also helped to underline the differences among the closely-related peoples found in Central Asia. Because Lenin believed that literacy was essential for ensuring the cooperation of the masses in the organization and management of the government, he insisted on universal literacy for the multitude of ethnic groups within the USSR (Kumanëv 1979). This was in direct opposition to the previous tsarist policies regarding literacy within the Russian Empire (Kumanëv 1979). Many groups did not have their own alphabets for written language, including the Kyrgyz, whose literati had been using Arabic script (Huskey 1995). While Lenin had unique alphabets for these languages designed using the Latin alphabet as a base, in the 1930s Stalin had all national languages converted to Cyrillic-based alphabets. Kyrgyz, Kazak, and Uzbek are all members of the Altaic language family rather than the Indo-European family that Russian belongs to, and these closely-related languages share phonemes that are absent from
Russian. Because of this, the Cyrillic alphabet had to be adapted and three new letters were added. While the phonemes are identical, the new symbols have slightly different forms in each language, thereby ensuring that they are immediately visually distinguishable and once again underlining ethnic difference rather than coherence. Kreindler (1982) argues that these alphabets were often created by or with assistance from native speakers, and therefore visual differentiation was the result of minority groups’ own sense of nationalism, rather than a Stalinist policy to divide and conquer. I would argue that this sense of nationalism existed only as a result of the effects of the Soviet divide-and-conquer policies, and therefore these policies were still the ultimate force behind the creation of unique alphabets.

In addition, Soviet ethnographers were sent throughout the USSR to study and document the traditions of the minority peoples living within the Soviet Union. In Central Asia, their goal appeared to be to define and delineate ethnicities among peoples who, in the past, would have defined themselves either with regard to larger language groups (e.g. Persian vs. Turkic), or more specifically by tribal (rather than ethnic) affiliation (Lubin et. al 1999). As Lubin et. al remark, “Soviet policy created Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks, Tajikistan and the Tajiks, and so on out of more fragmented and fluid identities that had existed earlier” (1999:41). This was partially accomplished by defining “national” symbols, including national foods, national games, and national dress. While many of these differences in tradition are historically accurate, in at least one case historians can trace the invention of an item of traditional dress to a specific Soviet scholar (Julie McBrian, personal communication, July 2004). Every Contemporary Kyrgyz person can identify those symbols of culture that distinguish them from other
Central Asian groups, and these symbols were commonly used in Soviet public art in order to emphasize ethnic difference alongside Soviet unity. National and ethnic symbols are still being used in Kyrgyzstan after independence, both by the government in statements of nationalistic pride, and by tour companies who are selling the unique culture and exoticism of the Kyrgyz Republic. The most common symbols displayed are men and women in traditional dress, eagle-hunters, yurts, and shyrdaks, which are sewn felt carpets unique to Kyrgyzstan. In this way, the legacy of ethnic division has created shyrdaks as a unique symbol of Kyrgyz identity and an important mnemonic for Kyrgyz culture within the tourism industry.

**History of Altyn Ju’un**

I spent two years (June 1998 through June 2000) as a member of the sixth group of Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) to work in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyzstani government had invited the Peace Corps into their country to assist with teaching English and with small enterprise development. As a result, several of the Volunteers I worked with were assigned as consultants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that specialized in the production of Kyrgyz arts and handicrafts for sale. It was through my fellow PCVs that I was introduced to the kinds of shyrdaks that were sold to tourists and the training programs that these NGOs provided. As a result of observing the difference between shyrdaks in people’s homes and those sold as souvenirs, I returned to Kyrgyzstan in 2004 to conduct my field research with an NGO that I will call Altyn Ju’un.

Altyn Ju’un was established as an NGO in Ak To’o in 1996. Their main function is to run a consignment shop in which their members can sell shyrdaks (felt carpets) and other souvenirs to the primarily European and U.S. tourists who travel through Ak To’o.
Altyn Ju’un members must pay a membership fee of 200 som (US$4.00) in order to sell their goods in the store. Altyn Ju’un shares a building with another NGO, which is a community-based tourism group. This group specializes in low-budget tourism, featuring homestays and cultural exchange. At least four other travel organizations and five other souvenir shops operate in Ak To’o, a town of approximately 20,000 people. However, by sharing space with the tourism organization and by specializing in shyrdaks, Altyn Ju’un maintains their portion of the souvenir market in Ak To’o.

The store has four employees: a director, a manager/bookkeeper, and a sales staff of two. According to their estimates, Altyn Ju’un has anywhere from 200 to 300 members throughout the Oblast (the term for state or province), and my survey of the store yielded shyrdaks from seventeen different villages, as well as a large number of shyrdaks that did not have provenience information. However, the staff claims to receive stock most commonly from members living either in Ak To’o or in two nearby villages. They have semi-annual meetings with all of their members and they also provide periodic workshops to teach members new techniques as well as new designs for ornaments and other souvenirs.

Shyrdaks are the bulk of the stock in the Altyn Ju’un store, but they also sell felt purses and handbags, felt chair-seat covers, woven saddle bags and felt wall-hangings, embroidery, felt hats, eyeglass cases, and slippers, as well as small knick-knacks and ornament-style souvenirs made from felt, leather and wood. Members can bring anything they want to sell into the store, including used and antique embroidery and jewelry. They are usually paid only on consignment, after the item has been sold. An inventory of all the merchandise brought in is maintained, as well as an inventory of which items are

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2 All prices in US dollars are approximate, based on an exchange rate of 50 som/US$1.00.
sold. Information about the maker of a particular shyrdak, including her surname and village of residence, is typically written on a patch of material that is sewn to the back of the shyrdak. When the maker comes into the store, she is paid for those items that have been sold since her last visit.

The sale price for a shyrdak or souvenir is based on the price paid to the maker. While prices for souvenirs are calculated differently, members receive 750 som (US$15) per square meter for their shyrdaks. By comparison, the national average monthly wage in 2004 was 2,101 som (US$42); however, the average wage for farmers was only 941 som (US$18.28) per month (National Statistical Committee 2004). To this base price, the NGO’s 30 percent commission is added, and then a 10 percent national tax and 3 percent local tax. Altyn Ju’un’s promotional booklet estimates that it takes 80 hours to complete half a square meter of sewing, and the average area of shyrdaks sampled from the Altyn Ju’un store was 1.4 square meters. One staff member stated that Altyn Ju’un gives shyrdak-makers a better price for their goods than they could get elsewhere, because other souvenir shops will take the taxes out of the maker’s payment rather than passing those costs along to the consumer. If buyers wish to haggle over the price of a particular shyrdak, Altyn Ju’un employees lower the percentage of their commission rather than lowering the price to be paid to the maker.

Unlike other handicrafts NGOs, Altyn Ju’un typically does not make shyrdaks to order, and there is no production facility in which members communally make their shyrdaks. Instead, they are made in women’s homes, during their free time, and any patterns or colors that they wish to use are acceptable. They are also responsible for making or purchasing all of the raw materials necessary for their shyrdaks. One of the
employees of the foreign aid organization that helped set up Altyn Ju’un told me during his annual visit that his organization’s aim in creating Altyn Ju’un was to maintain traditional shyrdak making practices and not influence their production processes. He believes that there is a market for traditional shyrdaks, and that if the demand drops off, that the members of Altyn Ju’un should not alter their practices and designs simply to meet consumer tastes. He even expressed dismay at the extent to which the shyrdaks he saw on display at the Altyn Ju’un store had changed over time.

Two exceptions to this hands-off approach are shyrdaks commissioned by individuals, and orders for traditional shyrdaks placed by Kyrgyz Style\(^3\), an artisans’ NGO and store located in the capital, Bishkek. The Kyrgyz Style NGO specializes in providing training and sales venues to Kyrgyz artisans, and it supports these projects with a retail shop that also offers wholesale export of shyrdaks, souvenirs and clothing to the U.S. and Europe. They have collaborated with European designers to develop some of their felt slippers and other lines of souvenirs, but their shyrdaks tend to derive from traditional shyrdak designs. In the past, Kyrgyz Style’s staff have traveled to different regions of Kyrgyzstan and gone from house to house collecting photographs of heirloom shyrdaks. These photos hang in their office and are used for inspiration when designing new shyrdaks. Combined with this interest in traditional designs, they tend to use innovative color schemes and more typically Western dimensions than are found in heirloom shyrdaks. While Kyrgyz Style has its own assembly-line production facility in Bishkek, when they receive an order for a very “traditional” shyrdak they sometimes commission Altyn Ju’un to produce the carpet. Staff members at both Kyrgyz Style and

\(^3\) Anara Chochunbaieva, the director of Kyrgyz Style, requested that I use her organization’s real name, in the hopes that more people in the U.S. would hear about their organization and their products.
Altyn Ju’un claimed that the other organization decided on the price per meter paid to
Altyn Ju’un, but in these cases Altyn Ju’un only takes a 17 percent commission, and the
maker is paid the remainder, less national and local taxes. When filling Kyrgyz Style
commissions, the maker typically receives less per square meter than when she is making
her own carpets for sale in the Altyn Ju’un store. Unlike her own shyrdaks, however,
orders placed by Kyrgyz Style guarantee a sale.

Another way that Altyn Ju’un makes money is by commissioning its members to
make shyrdaks. In these instances, Altyn Ju’un buys the materials necessary for making
a shyrdak (thereby bringing more revenue to their members), and also pays women 100
som (US$2.00) per square meter for construction, and an additional 35 som (US$0.70)
per square meter if they draw the design themselves. Altyn Ju’un then sells these
shyrdaks in their store alongside the rest of their stock and the organization keeps the
revenue, although a staff member claims that the costs of materials and production keep
the net income at approximately 30 percent, the same percentage as their commission on
member’s shyrdaks. Only about 10 percent of the stock in my sample of Altyn Ju’un
shyrdaks were designated as office shyrdaks, and only one of my informants mentioned
that she was currently working on a shyrdak for the office.

The money that Altyn Ju’un makes from its commissions is used for employee
salaries, office overhead, and member workshops, as well as travel to and from sales
shows. Altyn Ju’un puts on regular biannual shyrdak shows in Bishkek, as well as
participating in other shows in Central Asia and an annual show in Europe.
CHAPTER FIVE

SHYRDAK PRODUCTION

Introduction

*Shyrdaks* are unique to Kyrgyzstan; its neighbors all have traditions of producing knotted pile carpets instead of felt. Even within Kyrgyzstan, *shyrdaks* are made only in the north, while the southern provinces, with more Uzbek cultural influences, produce pile carpets instead. One explanation given by an informant for the lack of *shyrdaks* in the south was the fact that sedge does not grow in that region, making it impossible to fabricate the sedge mats needed to make felt.

There are several stages to the *shyrdak* production process. All of the materials are made by hand from raw sheep’s wool, including the thread and yarn, and it may take more hours for a woman to produce the raw materials for a *shyrdak* than it does to sew the *shyrdak* itself. It takes approximately 12 fleeces worth of raw wool to complete a full-sized *shyrdak*. In a domestic setting, *shyrdaks* are produced during free time, and they are often the collective labor of all the women in the household, including the female head, her daughters-in-law, and her unmarried daughters.

Materials

The first stage in *shyrdak* production is spinning the *shona* (thread) and the *je’ek* (yarn) necessary for constructing the *shyrdak*. *Shona* is always made using undyed black wool, and *je’ek* is made from white wool that is dyed after spinning. Both *shona* and *je’ek* are spun by hand using a drop spindle. *Shona* is a two-ply thread, spun to
approximately the same weight as crewel embroidery thread. It may be spun onto a commercially made cotton thread as a base, or a cotton thread may be spliced onto the end to make sewing with a commercial needle easier (Bunn 1996). *Shona* is preferred to commercial thread because it snags less during sewing. *Je’ek* is a three-ply yarn that can be anywhere from worsted-weight to bulky-weight. Half of the *je’ek* must be S-spun (twist slanting up to the left) and half Z-spun (twist slanting up to the right), so that there are equal amounts of yarn with the twist going in opposite directions for the *shyrdak*.

The second stage in *shyrdak* production is making the felt. A single *shyrdak* requires both white and black felt, since the white felt will be dyed for the top of the *shyrdak*, and the black felt will be used for the backing. Felting is made possible by a natural process that causes wool fibers to permanently interlock when they are acted upon by a combination of moisture, heat and friction. In felt making, fleeces from young sheep are preferred, as they have the healthiest cuticle and therefore make very strong felt.

The wool is neither washed nor carded before felting. Instead, it is prepared by beating with long wooden or metal rods, in order to break up the matted clumps and knock out some of the dirt and debris caught in the wool (see Figure 5.1). In the past, this was done on a cowhide, but a more recent innovation is to use a bed frame for this stage, as the holes between the interlocking bedsprings allow the dirt and debris to fall through and onto the ground. As the wool being beaten begins to fluff up, the edges are “folded”
into the center repeatedly, to ensure uniform processing. Once the wool has been thoroughly beaten once, it is cut into shorter lengths, as this makes stronger felt. Then the cut wool from several different sheep is mixed together and beaten a second time. The second beating continues the fluffing and cleaning process, and the “folding” action also ensures that the wool from different fleeces are thoroughly mixed together.

To make the felt, a large, rectangular sedge mat called a *chii* is used. The raw wool is laid out on the *chii* uniformly (see Figure 5.1). This may be done simply by beating a layer of wool a third time on the *chii* to even out the distribution, or two layers may be put down by hand, one with the wool fibers aligned horizontally and the other aligned vertically. Then the wool is sprinkled with hot water and the *chii* is tightly rolled up from one end, until all of the wool has been soaked and the wool and *chii* have been rolled together into a log shape. This is then covered in burlap sacks and tied securely to keep the log from unrolling or loosening. Next, the log is rolled back and forth, usually followed by several people lined up shoulder to shoulder. The log may simply be kicked in order to roll it, or it may be placed in a loop of rope that is then pulled by either a person or a horse (see Figure 5.1). The other participants step down hard on the log between each step forward, in order to provide the friction necessary to cause the wool to felt. The felting process takes approximately an hour for a large piece, with a pause to pour more hot water over the log and into the ends of the roll at the midway point.

Once an hour of agitation has passed, the log is carefully unwrapped and unrolled, and the felt is peeled off of the *chii* backing. The newly-made felt must continue to be processed by hand in order to achieve maximum strength. In this stage, the *chii* is used under the felt to protect it from dirt. The felt is rolled into a log by itself and several
people line up and kneel behind it. In unison, they rhythmically press down on the felt with their forearms, using all of their upper-body weight, and then sit partway up and roll the log a quarter- to a half-turn. They continue pressing and turning the felt for approximately another fifteen minutes, periodically reversing the end from which the log is rolled. The felt may shrink by up to a meter by the end of this stage, as the wool fibers contract and bind to one another. Once this step is complete, the felt can be washed by folding it lengthwise a few times and rolling it compactly, then pouring buckets of soapy water over it, and finally pouring clean water until the runoff is clear. At this stage the felt will be laid out to dry in the sun. In order to make very strong, clean felt, the forearm rolling, washing, and drying processes must be repeated for three days running.

When the je’ek (yarn) has been spun and the white felt is complete, it is time to dye them. Most women use chemical dyes that can be purchased at the market, although they complain that high quality dyes are both difficult to find and expensive, and the cheaper, Chinese dyes tend to run. Some women have learned to use local plant dyes, but the plants themselves are often not plentiful or easily located, and most of the colors available are muted yellows, browns and greens that do not appeal to Kyrgyz aesthetics.

Dyeing is done using a kazan (a large, shallow metal cauldron) supported over an open fire. The felt must be very clean before dyeing, or else the water will become dirty, and this will hamper the dyeing of both the original felt, and any other felt to be dyed afterwards in that water. It is important to move the whole piece of felt into or out of the dye bath at the same time, and turn it periodically if it is large, in order to ensure color evenness. A good bit of water evaporates during the dyeing process, so with each piece of felt additional water and dye are added to the kazan. Two kazans are placed beside
each other, so that clean water can be heated at the same time that the dyeing is taking place. The felt or yarn is left in the *kazan* for about 15-20 min., with a handful of salt added during the last 5 minutes as a fixative, until it has achieved the desired color. Because the integrity of the felt is compromised whenever it is wet, the forearm rolling process is repeated after dyeing to increase the felt’s strength. Once finished, the felt and yarn are not rinsed and are simply laid out to dry.

**Shyrdak Construction**

At this point, all of the materials necessary for making a *shyrdak* are complete: black wool *shona* (thread) and backing felt, dyed *je’ek* (yarn) and facing felt. In order to make a *shyrdak*, two contrasting colors of felt must be used for the facing. In newer *shyrdaks* that are being made for sale to tourists, contrasting colors of completely undyed wool may be used for both the facing and *je’ek* in the central design field, but in traditional *shyrdaks* colored wool is almost always used. However, undyed black wool may be used in the facing of heirloom and contemporary *shyrdaks* along with one color of dyed wool. Bunn cites the most common traditional color combinations as red and white, brown and white, red and blue, and brown and orange, with the more recent addition of red and green (1996:79); however, I have not personally seen *shyrdaks* with white as one of the main colors.
The next step is to draw and cut the design for the *shyrdak*. Two pieces of felt in contrasting colors are cut to the same size, and then the design is drawn in chalk on one of the pieces of felt. To ensure that the design is symmetrical, diagonal lines are drawn to divide the field, and then one quarter of the design is drawn in chalk. Next, the felt is folded in half and patted to allow the chalk line to transfer, creating a mirror image of the original quarter and completing half of the design. Any necessary adjustments to the pattern are made, and then the line for the first two quarters is traced in fresh chalk so that the design can be transferred to the other half of the felt (see Figure 5.2).

Once this is done, the two pieces of felt are basted together with the chalk design on top. Scissors are used to cut through both pieces of felt simultaneously so that the patterns cut into both colors match. Then the pieces are separated and reassembled with the central motif from one color of felt inset into the background from the other piece of felt, and vice-versa. This results in a pair of matching positive-and-negative panels that may be made into *shyrdaks* separately, or that may be used side-by-side in a single *shyrdak*. 

Figure 5.2: drawing the design on the felt (Tuttle 2004)
At this stage, the different pieces of felt may be stitched together at one corner to ensure that the proper placement and orientation of the inset designs is maintained. The pieces of colored felt are then sewn together, and in the process the yarn (je’ek) is sewn along the edges where the two colors of felt meet (see Figure 5.3). To do this, the felt is held with the wrong side facing the sewer, and a needle threaded with shona (thread) is passed down through one piece of felt very close to the edge. The needle is then passed through the middle of both strands of je’ek (yarn), which are held taut on the right side of the felt, and finally back up through the second piece of felt. When the stitch is pulled tight, the juncture between the two colors of felt is hidden by the je’ek, which also provides a decorative outline for the design. Because the two strands of je’ek have been spun in opposite directions, the opposing twists of the three-ply strands creates a herringbone pattern. In traditional shyrdaks, the color of the je’ek is usually chosen to both complement and contrast with the colors of the felt, thereby outlining and enhancing the design.

Once all the pieces of the facing have been sewn together with the je’ek outlining, the facing is sewn to the backing of the shyrdak with a quilting technique known as.
shyryk (see Figure 5.4). The facing and the backing are first basted together, and then lines of tiny stitches are taken through both layers of felt, following the contours of the design and creating a quilted effect. This is also done with black shona thread, and the quilting shows on both sides of the finished shyrdak. Each stitch is approximately 1 millimeter long with .5 millimeters of spacing. Very small, tight, even stitches result in a continuous crease in the felt that follows and enhances the contour of the design. Larger stitches that are individually visible are considered poor quality work, as are any visible knots or ends of the shona (thread) left on the underside of the shyrdak. Instead of knotting, the ends of the shona are sewn into the felt so that approximately the first and last inch of a length of shona runs inside the layer of felt as an anchor, and the end is clipped flush with the material. Large areas of felt that do not contain any design elements may have additional lines of quilting, as the quilting keeps the layers of felt from rubbing against each other over time and wearing holes in the facing. Once the quilting is complete, the two layers of felt are trimmed to make the edges even, and then a final line of je’ek (yarn) is sewn around the outside, simultaneously sewing the edges of

Figure 5.4: an example of shyryk (quilting) (Tuttle 2004).
the two layers shut. Sometimes this is done with four strands of je’ek, two matched pairs in contrasting colors, in which case a true herringbone is created as the matched strands of je’ek are alternated, the last pair being pulled to the outside of the herringbone “braid” and the new pair pulled to the center between every stitch.

There are two alternate ways of constructing a shyrdak. The first and more common is to produce a shyrdak without any quilting (see figure 5.5). This is done by sewing the pieces of the facing felt together without the je’ek (yarn), and then sewing the backing to the facing at the same time that the je’ek is sewn into place along the junctions of the different colored pieces of felt. In this case, the stitches go from the wrong side up through both layers of felt (backing and facing), then through the two strands of je’ek, and finally back down through the two layers of felt. In this case, the stitches that show on the underside follow the outline of the design, as the je’ek covers the joined edges of felt on the top. Shyrdaks made this way typically have designs whose elements are narrower, leaving smaller spaces of felt without sewing and limiting future wear. One of my informants had shyrdaks made in this manner with flour paste spread between the
facing and backing to act as a sort of glue and to prevent slippage and wear; she indicated that one drawback to this method was that the flour tended to attract mice.

Another technique, used much less often, is called *it tish* (dog’s tooth). This is a decorative way of joining the edges of the facing without the use of *je’ek* (yarn). A stitch is taken very close to and parallel to the edge of one piece of felt, and then a second stitch made the same way is taken in the adjoining piece of felt, spaced so that the two stitches are lined up opposite each other. When the stitch is pulled tight, it puckers the edges of the felt, creating a pinking or serrated effect. The backing is then sewn onto the facing with contour lines of quilting. While attractive and eye-catching, this technique takes longer than using *je’ek* (yarn) to hide the stitches used for joining the pieces of felt, and so it is used sparingly if at all.

According to informants, the main technological innovations regarding this process are the use of chalk and scissors. Both have contributed to a greater degree of perfection and symmetry in designs. Before scissors, simple knives were used to cut through the two layers of felt, which did not allow for a great deal of control over cutting. And before chalk was available, designs were drawn freehand using either charcoal or salt water. If saltwater was used, a white line of salt would be left on the felt once the water dried.
Historical Production Processes

Historically, shyrdaks have been made exclusively by women, as have pile carpets in southern Kyrgyzstan (Almoldoeva 2002). They are part of the traditional ornamentation used in yurts, as layers of ala-kiis (another kind of felt carpet) and shyrdaks were used to cover the ground to provide both padding and insulation. As such, shyrdaks were an integral part of a woman’s dowry, along with bedding, clothing, and embroidered wall hangings, since the dowry was comprised of all those materials necessary to decorate the yurt. As his brideprice, the groom was expected to provide the yurt itself, as well as the animals necessary to maintain a family.

The bride’s mother was typically responsible for making the shyrdak or shyrdaks for her daughter’s dowry, but as a woman might begin making her daughter’s dowry when the child was very small, the future bride often assisted with the construction. Sewing was typically done communally by all of the women in the household. Because the Kyrgyz are patrilocal, this included unmarried daughters and any daughters-in-law. Shyrdaks were usually sewn during the winter months, when the heavy wool could be laid over the maker’s lap during construction. Usually a woman would not make her first shyrdak for her own family until after marriage, so her mother-in-law would assist her with it rather than her mother.

While the ability to cut and sew shyrdaks was once a universal women’s skill, only a few women possessed the ability to draw shyrdak designs, a trait that is still considered an inborn talent. These women were known as oimochus (literally, design specialists). Each village would have only one or two oimochus, and the other women of the village would go to them when a new shyrdak was needed. The oimochus would
draw a design for them that included symbolism that was appropriate for the occasion. Only the oimochus were familiar with the names and symbolism associated with the various design elements. In southern Kyrgyzstan, there were similar women who were known for their ability to design pile carpets, and they were sometimes in enough demand to become itinerant artisans who traveled from village to village (Akmoldoeva 2002).

Historically, women learned to make shyrdaks as girls. Young girls apprenticed with their mothers or mothers-in-law in a process that matches Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral practice (LPP). Lave and Wenger describe learning as a process that follows an apprenticeship model more closely than the classroom model, but it does not require a formal relationship between master and apprentice. Lave and Wenger instead describe this learning process as a means of incorporating members into a community of practice. LPP is a way of modeling and acquiring the skills and behavior needed to become a core member of a community of practice. Instead of having peripheral members begin learning a sequence of skills from the beginning and in a classroom-like setting, the entire sequence of skills is enacted by core members in the presence of these peripheral members. LPP is the set of tasks that peripheral members are expected to engage in, and frequently these tasks are performed at the ends of the skill sequence. For example, Lave and Wenger describe a case study of apprentice tailors in Liberia, where “apprentices begin by learning the finishing stages of producing a garment, go on to learn to sew it, and only later learn to cut it out” (1991:72). In the same way, Kyrgyz girls would begin learning how to make a shyrdak by assisting with the end stages of shyrdak production – helping their mothers or mothers-in-law with
the quilting (shyryk) stage. This is how the majority of my informants claimed to have learned to make shyrdaks. Because the peripheral participant is present to observe the entire production process as performed by master shyrdak makers, they already have a working knowledge of the entire sequence before they have acquired the specific skills needed for each step in the production process.

**Contemporary Shyrdak Use**

Shyrdaks are still made in Kyrgyzstan, but most of my informants indicated that a large proportion of the population (some claim up to half of women) no longer knows how to make shyrdaks. Ethnicity within Kyrgyzstan is divided along urban/rural and regional lines. The northern oblasts (provinces/states), which include Chu, Issyk-Kul, Naryn and Talas, have more ethnic Russians than the southern oblasts (Jalal-Abad, Osh and Batken), and urban centers tend to have a higher percentage of Russians while ethnic Kyrgyz dominate rural villages. As was mentioned previously, shyrdaks are not produced in the southern provinces, but knotted carpets play a similar role in this region. Imported European goods are still perceived as higher status than locally or domestically manufactured goods, and rural Kyrgyz are commonly stigmatized as “backwards” and unsophisticated. However, there did not appear to be any stigma attached to either shyrdaks or shyrdak production by urban-dwelling Kyrgyz. Many urban Kyrgyz whose children attend Russian-language schools and speak Russian at home lament the loss of their language and traditions, despite the negative image that is sometimes attached to rural foods and forms of dress. I witnessed a wealthy Kyrgyz couple from the city purchasing shyrdaks from Altyn Ju’un for their home, and Kyrgyz Style markets their
line of shyrdaks as a complement to urban, European décor, indicating the acceptance of shyrdaks in an urban setting. Many urban Kyrgyz live in apartment buildings and do not own livestock such as sheep, which are kept by virtually every village household for both meat and wool. The lack of resources and wool production space may be a primary cause for the reduction in shyrdak production among urban-dwelling Kyrgyz.

Within the village of Kochkor, every home that I visited had shyrdaks as a part of the décor. Most village homes include several large rooms with minimal furniture, but with shyrdaks or ala-kiyis (another kind of felt carpet) on all of the floors. Often, a room will have multiple layers of shyrdaks on the floor. Shyrdaks are rarely hung on the wall, as they are very heavy; velvet patchwork and machine-made Oriental-style carpets are much more common as wall hangings.

Historically, the focal point of the yurt was the juk (Akmoldoeva 2002) (see Figure 5.6), which consisted of one or two carved wooden trunks, topped by a pile of folded shyrdaks and bedding. The size of the pile was an indicator of wealth and therefore was prominently displayed. In modern houses, the juk is still maintained, sometimes in a specially-constructed wall niche, and sometimes simply at the end of a sleeping room. Typically, it is the heirloom shyrdaks and those intended as dowry gifts that are stored in this manner, although heirloom shyrdaks up to 60 years old may be found in use as well. Every home I visited had a room with a juk, with anywhere from two or three to upwards of ten shyrdaks stored in this manner. These were in addition to the shyrdaks being used actively within the home.
At Altyn Ju’un, the majority of women who made shyrdaks were middle-aged, in their thirties or older. It appeared that most of the women in their twenties who sold items at the Altyn Ju’un store specialized in small felt souvenirs, such as purses, slippers, and stuffed animals. However, in the capital I spoke with two women in their early twenties who were selling souvenirs, who both made small shyrdaks as well as other souvenirs. Also, I met a few middle-aged women in Ak To’o who were beginning to learn shyrdak production at the time, indicating that the demographics of new learners may vary widely.

Some informants made shyrdaks primarily for sale, keeping very few for their own homes, while others made shyrdaks exclusively for themselves and their children. None of my informants relied on shyrdak making exclusively for their income; it was always an additional source, and production varied depending on how many members of the household were involved. One of my informants had a daughter and two daughters-
in-law living with her, and they had a total of 11 partially completed commodity *shyrdaks* in their home. Another informant’s daughters both worked, and she had four grandchildren to care for, so her ability to produce *shyrdaks* was very limited. Yet another informant had several joint projects with neighbors making *shyrdaks* for their homes, and plans for several more for her own home.
CHAPTER SIX
DATA ANALYSIS

Research Questions

My research questions revolved around the transmission and modification of cultural practices. First, I wanted to question the commonly held notion that changes in commodity shyrdaks indicated a loss of traditional styles of shyrdak-making. One informant, the Danish buyer mentioned previously, regularly buys used shyrdaks to ensure their preservation, because she believes that the “traditional” styles will soon be gone. If this prediction is true, then I would expect to find many more similarities between commodity and contemporary shyrdaks than between either of these groups and heirloom shyrdaks, indicating that shyrdak makers have innovated and incorporated new elements into their shyrdaks. If the changes in commodity shyrdaks are not affecting contemporary shyrdaks at all, then I would expect to see no significant differences between heirloom and contemporary shyrdaks.

Similarly, Bunn (1996) states that the shyrdaks being produced as commodities show a standardization not present among heirloom shyrdaks. She states that innovation in design is desired by shyrdak makers, and that the introduction of the market has caused a limitation of designs. If this statement was true, then I would expect to observe less variation within the commodity shyrdak sample group than is found among the heirloom sample group.

I also wanted to determine if there were patterns of change between heirloom and commodity shyrdaks that would indicate the cause of those changes. I wanted to track changes in shyrdak total size, shyryk (quilting) style, and complexity of motifs as I would
expect that a reduction in size, amount of quilting, and complexity of motifs within the commodity shyrdak sample would be caused by the intensification of production and the consequent need to streamline production processes for the sake of speed. I was unable to obtain the linear measurements of all shyrdaks sampled, so I created five size categories: rectangular large (more than approximately 54" long), square large (more than approximately 54" per side), rectangular small (less than approximately 54" long), runner (length more than twice the width), and round or oval throw rug (varying sizes). Shyryk (quilting) was categorized according to six styles: absent, single line, single line with blank areas over approximately 2” square, single line with additional lines of contour fill, single line with additional decorative fill, and mixed (where some design fields contain shyryk, and others do not). Motifs were divided into three levels of complexity (simple, compound, and tabak) using criteria that are outlined in more detail below.

Comparing common color combinations used in all three sample groups would indicate to what extent color changes were being made as a result of perceived market pressures. If the color combinations found among heirloom and contemporary shyrdaks were very similar, and both were very different from those found among commodity shyrdaks, then this would indicate that color changes were being made specifically for tourists. Colors present in shyrdaks were coded by design field moving from the outside edge to the center, but each color was only coded once per design field. The colors of felt and je’ek used were coded separately for each design field. In analysis, only absolute combinations were considered, i.e. the combinations red/blue and blue/red were not distinguished from one another.
Finally, I wanted to investigate whether commodification was causing changes in production processes and knowledge acquisition. My interviews were designed to determine whether there were changes in how women made shyrdaks, when women learned to make them, from whom they learned, and how much knowledge they had about shyrdak designs and motifs. I expected that a reduction in learning during the Soviet period followed by a renewal of interest in the post-Soviet period (a common pattern in colonial contexts, where local practices were suppressed by colonial powers, followed by cultural revivals after independence) would show a distinct shift in the age at which a woman makes her first shyrdak. I also wanted to know if more women drew their own shyrdak designs, or if they still used the services of an oimochu (design specialist). Finally, I expected that the majority of women would not have knowledge of the symbolism and names of Kyrgyz motifs if this knowledge was restricted to the oimochus in the past.

Methodology

I did my field research in Ak To’o, with the shyrdak-making group Altyn Ju’un. Having lived in Kyrgyzstan for two years previously, I was already familiar with Kyrgyz cultural practices and had retained basic knowledge of the Kyrgyz language. My goal was to collect data on three different categories of shyrdaks, learn contemporary shyrdak production methods, and interview a sample of women who made shyrdaks about their history of shyrdak-making and their knowledge of shyrdak designs. I began by assisting a neighbor in all of the steps of making a shyrdak, from making the chii (sedge mats), to spinning thread and yarn, to sewing a shyrdak. Each step was documented with notes
and photographs. The sample shyrdaks that I sewed were intended as kitchen chair seat covers, but they were assembled using the same techniques used to produce large shyrdaks.

For the first month in the field, I was present at the Altyn Ju’un store six hours a day from three to five days a week, observing and assisting in the day-to-day running of the shop. During my second month in Kochkor I continued to assist at the store, but several half days were spent obtaining interviews. My duties at the store included assisting with sales, translating between the staff and English-speaking tourists when needed, and acting as an additional staff member when necessary. During my time at the store I performed unstructured interviews with staff members and engaged in participant observation regarding the organization of the NGO, the pricing of their souvenirs and shyrdaks, and historical and contemporary production methods.

The three groups of shyrdaks I sampled were commodity shyrdaks (N=159), heirloom shyrdaks (N=97), and contemporary shyrdaks (N=61). Commodity shyrdaks were defined as any shyrdaks made specifically for sale, not for personal use. This group would presumably be made with the needs and expectations of tourists in mind. Heirloom shyrdaks were defined as any shyrdaks being used in women’s homes that were more than ten years old. Ten years was used as the cutoff because this is approximately coeval with Kyrgyzstan’s independence and transition to a market economy. This group was unlikely to have been influenced by innovations in shyrdak production that developed as a result of commodification. Included in this sample was a selection of second-hand shyrdaks being sold at another store in town. These were included because they were all made prior to independence for home use before a market for “antique”
shyrdaks had developed. Contemporary shyrdaks were defined as any shyrdaks made for domestic use that were ten or fewer years old. These shyrdaks were made after independence, which indicates that their construction and design could have been influenced by market-related innovations.

To obtain a sample of commodity shyrdaks for analysis, I photographed as complete an inventory as possible of the shyrdaks in the Altyn Ju’un store from June 8, 2004 to June 15, 2004. The number of shyrdaks was too large to enable me to photograph and record basic data on the entire stock in a single day, as would have been ideal. While tourist traffic was still very low at the beginning of June, there was some turnover of shyrdaks, as stock was sold and new carpets added during the time that I was photographing. I carefully cleared my database of duplicate photographs but there was no way to check for stock that had been missed during photographing.

In addition, a buyer from the Netherlands visited in the middle of my inventory. I had photographed most of the smaller shyrdaks in the store at that point but not the larger ones, and she purchased several large shyrdaks. Also, I was informed that buyers with a shop in the Seychelles had purchased a number of the large shyrdaks in February of 2004, and that the stock of large shyrdaks had not been replenished in the intervening time. All of these factors may have contributed to a size bias in my sample of commodity shyrdaks. However, many women, both staff and other Altyn Ju’un members, commented to me that they realized tourists do not like to buy large shyrdaks, as they are hard to carry. Therefore, perceived market demand was one of the reasons that the stock of large shyrdaks had not been replenished in the four month period.
Once I had met and interacted with several members of the NGO, I began doing interviews. Eighteen of the 24 women I interviewed were members of Altyn Ju’un and could be approached with an interview request based on my connections within the group, and the remainder were referred to me by other interviewees. This network sampling strategy was necessary because during my interviews I was also asking to photograph all of the shyrdaks in the women’s homes, a somewhat invasive project. These structured interviews were supplemented with my unstructured interviews and participant observation at the Altyn Ju’un store.

One benefit of this sampling strategy was that I gained a sample of heirloom and contemporary shyrdaks from women who were currently making commodity shyrdaks, and this is the group who would be most likely to incorporate commodity-based innovations to their contemporary shyrdaks. At some point, either before or after the interview, I would photograph each of the shyrdaks a woman had in her home. I recorded the maker, intended use and estimated age of every shyrdak photographed so that they could be divided into the heirloom and contemporary shyrdak samples.

I realized late in the interview process that small throw rugs and runners used in the home were not typically called shyrdaks, even though all sizes of carpets are sold as shyrdaks to tourists. As a result, while I was able to photograph each woman’s full-size shyrdaks, which are typically kept in one room of the house, I often was not shown the area rugs that may have been present in other parts of the house. Also, most large shyrdaks are kept in storage in the juk. Because large shyrdaks are protected from damage in this way, they are more easily preserved to be passed from one generation to the next. However, by their nature, throw rugs are placed in areas of high traffic and are
more likely to be worn out from use. Both of these factors may have caused a bias in the sizes of carpets in my contemporary and heirloom shyrdak samples.

Interviews included questions regarding the informant’s personal history, when and from whom she learned to make shyrdaks, and who she had taught. In addition, I asked informants to give me the names of motifs present in their shyrdaks, which I sketched and recorded. While I conducted the first four interviews myself, I realized the limits of my understanding and had the assistance of a translator for the remainder of the interviews. Only one informant refused to pull out her shyrdaks to be photographed, but her interview data was recorded. All informants were given a small gift (US$1.00 in value) and a photograph of themselves with whichever family members they wished in compensation for their assistance.

**Shyrdaks**

The goal of analyzing the shyrdak photographs was to determine whether and how commodity shyrdaks differ from heirloom and contemporary shyrdaks. I coded the carpet photographs based on 93 variables in three different categories: construction, colors, and motifs. There are 13 variables in the construction category (see Appendix A) including presence/absence of the 5 possible design fields (see figure 6.1), type of quilting, and layout of motifs. Most of these variables contribute to the amount of time it takes to construct the shyrdak. Minimizing construction time allows women to make more shyrdaks in the same time period. The ability to make a large number of crafts quickly is cited by many as the reason for changes in commodified traditional arts (e.g.
Graburn 1979) and this would be the rational response to a system where individuals are paid according to how many items they produce.

The color category is encompassed by 39 variables (see Appendix A) that indicate the colors used in both the felt and the je’ek (yarn) within each design field. I distinguished between ten dyed wool colors (red, pink, orange, yellow, green, light blue, dark blue, purple, brown and black) and six undyed wool colors (natural white, natural dark grey, natural light grey, natural red, natural black, and natural brown). Color is one of the aspects of shyrdaks most commented upon by tourists in Kyrgyzstan, and may be the most important criterion upon which these tourists base their purchases. It was consistently ranked as the primary criterion when I assisted tourists in choosing a shyrdak from the Altyn Ju’un stock for sale. The members of Altyn Ju’un also asked me about color preferences many times, and indicated that certain ethnicities seemed to prefer some colors over others, demonstrating consciousness of color as a selling point. In the case of shyrdaks, some of the traditionally popular color combinations, such as red and green, have distinct cultural associations that would limit their salability to Westerners.
For these reasons, color is a variable that is uniquely sensitive to and indicative of market pressures.

Finally, the use of motifs reflects the preferences and knowledge of the shyrdak maker, rather than the buyer. While certain motifs may please a buyer’s eye more than others, this seemed to be a secondary consideration after color in my observations of the decision making processes of tourists. In addition, shyrdak makers did not indicate that they had observed a preference for certain designs or motifs on the part of buyers, and never asked me about my own design preferences. Only one of the commodity shyrdaks included a figurative design, a pair of birds, and all but one of the abstract motifs used in the commodity shyrdaks sampled (the exception being the jurok [heart] design) did not correspond with any Western symbolism. This ensured that buyers could not associate particular meanings with motifs. I coded for presence/absence of 29 different motifs in the central field, as well as coding for 12 different border motifs and 8 different frame motifs (see Appendix B). In most cases, individual motifs were defined and named based on the information elicited from the motif identification portion of my interviews. The kyz and bala motifs were not identified independently by informants, but were described as such in the context of tabak designs. Also, I chose to identify tabak designs based on their component motifs, while informants used the name tabak for any cruciform design. Finally, I took the liberty of defining variations of some designs, such as bychak uchu 1 and 2, that I felt might be significant.
Interviews

I performed structured interviews with the assistance of an interpreter. My interview questions were as follows:

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. When did you make your first shyrdak?
4. Did anyone help you? Who?
5. How many shyrdaks have you made?
6. Who taught you to make shyrdaks?
7. Who have you taught to make shyrdaks?
8. Have you sold any shyrdaks? Where?
9. Do you draw your own designs? Who draws them for you?
10. Do you know the meanings of the designs?

These interviews took place after photographing all of the shyrdaks each interviewee owned, and were completed by asking interviewees to name as many of the motifs found in their shyrdaks as possible. The names were noted, along with a quick sketch of the particular motif indicated. At this point, additional information was often provided in unstructured interviews.

Interview data were entered into a spreadsheet for comparison. I divided the data from my interviews according to the ages of the women interviewed in order to see trends over time. For the information regarding knowledge of motif names, often different women would apply the same name to different motifs, and in turn a single motif might be identified by multiple informants using several different names. I calculated both the number of different motifs given the same name, and the different names associated with the same motif. I then used a percentage to calculate agreement in name/term usage.
CHAPTER SEVEN

FORMAL INTERPRETATION

Table 7.1a: Multinomial Logistic Regression for Construction Variables

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<th>Sig.</th>
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Table 7.1b: Multinomial Logistic Regression for Motif Variables

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Table: Likelihood Ratio Tests

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<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMOTNUM</td>
<td>25.394</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVARIATN</td>
<td>12.209</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multinomial Logistic Regression

Each shyrdak was coded for a total of 95 different characters (see Appendix A).

While central motifs were coded on a presence/absence basis, most other variables were discrete but not binomial. Using SPSS 11.0, I performed multiple multinomial logical regressions in a stepwise manner on the three shyrdak samples using two different sets of variables: construction variables, and motif variables. In both cases, the first regression was performed using all variables of that type, and then subsequent regressions were performed using any variables whose significance values in the Likelihood Ratio Tests was below 0.1, the value that SPSS indicates is significant relative to this test. This step was repeated until all significance values were below this threshold.

Within the category of construction variables, the values that proved most predictive in distinguishing the three sample groups were total size, shyryk (quilting)
type, the presence of frames 1 and 2 as design fields, the use of an “evil eye” patch in the border design field, matching the border to the central design field, border layout, number of motifs in the central design field, and variation in central design field motifs (see Table 7.1a). The motifs with the highest predictive value were salbai, arka muiuz, jigit tabak, kochkor tabak, kochkor-karga tabak, kyz tabak and other tabak (see Table 7.1b).

In both cases, differences between commodity, heirloom and contemporary shyrdaks proved to be significant (having a value above 0.05) when using both Pearson and Deviance Goodness-of-Fit indicators (see Table 7.1a and 7.1b). This means that the three samples of shyrdaks could be distinguished statistically from one another as unique populations. This disproves the hypothesis that heirloom and contemporary shyrdaks are identical. It also leads us to reject the hypothesis that the changes made to commodity shyrdaks have not affected contemporary shyrdak production.

Construction Variables

The use of shyryk (quilting) and overall size are two variables that should indicate whether women who make shyrdaks for tourists are simplifying the production process to increase production. Both reducing the amount of quilting and reducing the overall size of shyrdaks should make it possible for women to produce more shyrdaks in the same time period.

Quilting

There are several styles of shyryk that can be observed in shyrdaks. Some shyrdaks are made without any quilting at all; others are made with a single line that
follows the outline of the design; and yet others have additional rows of contour quilting or decorative patterns that fill in larger areas. Because both quilted and non-quilted shyrdaks still require two steps for sewing together the pieces of the facing and sewing on the backing, there is little or no time saved in the production of shyrdaks without shyryk. However, any additional quilting beyond what is necessary to attach the backing does increase production time, and extra quilting does not increase the sale price.

Another consideration in the presence and type of shyryk used is the fact that shyryk is used as a measure of quality. Leaving large areas (more than approximately 3 square inches) of felt unquilted results in the two layers of felt rubbing together, which causes holes to form in the facing felt. As Figure 7.1 shows, while almost 30 percent of heirloom shyrdaks were made in the unquilted style, none of the heirloom shyrdaks with quilting contained large unquilted areas (single + blank), while ten percent of commodity shyrdaks have this characteristic. The presence of large unquilted areas could be caused by either an attempt to streamline production, or else it could be the result of inexperience on the part of the shyrdak maker. In either case, it is discouraged by the staff at Altyn.
Ju’un. I witnessed one young woman bringing in a bag made from felt in the *shyrdak* style, who was instructed to include additional lines of quilting before the bag would be accepted for sale in the shop. Also, I observed one of the staff members adding quilting to a small *shyrdak* that had been constructed without it, although whether this was done in real concern for the quality of the piece, or whether it was in response to my instructions to some tourists in using quilting as a measure of good construction, I do not know. It is possible that an attitude that quilted *shyrdaks* were superior also contributed to the small percentage of completely unquilted *shyrdaks* in the commodity sample. As was stated above, the motifs used on unquilted *shyrdaks* were usually smaller and spaced more closely, which ensures smaller areas of unquilted space, making concerns about wear less of an issue. One informant also indicated that, in the past, the quality of the wool and therefore of the felt was higher, and that this enabled women to make *shyrdaks* without any quilting, presumably because the felt resisted wear better than that made today. An explanation for reduced wool quality was provided by a French textiles artist, who indicated that the varieties of sheep preferred in recent years have tended towards those bred for meat production rather than wool production.

The contemporary *shyrdak* sample shows some interesting trends when compared to the other two samples. The number of unquilted *shyrdaks* in this sample is similar to that in the commodity sample, reflecting either the difference in modern wool quality or the perception that quilted *shyrdaks* are better made. However, the number of contemporary *shyrdaks* with large unquilted areas is much lower than in the commodity sample, and the percentages of contour and decorative quilting is similar to the heirloom *shyrdak* sample. This would be consistent with a continued concern for high-quality...
shyrdaks for the home, while some women may be making shortcuts in the production of commodity shyrdaks.

However, the percentage of shyrdaks with additional contour lines in the heirloom and commodity samples (10 percent in each sample) is actually lower than we see in the commodity shyrdaks (18 percent), which would be contrary to expectations of simplifying production processes in this sample. The combination of relatively high numbers of commodity shyrdaks with large blank areas, low numbers of completely unquilted shyrdaks and high numbers of shyrdaks that incorporate additional contour lines points towards three different explanations of this phenomenon. The first is that we simply have a mix of shyrdak makers with differing ability levels, some of whom leave too much unquilted space out of inexperience and some who do not. The second is that this variation reflects some women who have realized that shortcuts will increase their production while others are still maintaining traditional standards of quality. The third is that quilting is perceived by some makers as an important sign of quality or decoration that is recognized and preferred by tourists, and therefore they are willing to invest the extra time required to include additional contour lines in the belief that it will pay off in better sales in the long run.

Shyrdak Size

The second variable whose change may be attributable to a desire to produce more shyrdaks in a shorter period is overall size. When we look at commodity shyrdaks as compared to heirloom shyrdaks (see Figure 7.2), we do see a significant difference in the distribution of sizes. I have already discussed possible factors that would have lead to
a bias in the heirloom sample and commodity samples, but I still believe the difference is significant.

Intensified production is not the best explanation for smaller commodity shyrdaks, however. Because the Altyn Ju’un pricing system pays by the square meter, being able to produce more individual pieces of the same total area does not necessarily increase overall income. This is true if a small shyrdak has the same number of production steps and the same amount of sewing per square meter as a large shyrdak. Even within a system of shared labor, two family members working individually under these circumstances will turn out the same number of square meters as those two members working together on a single shyrdak. One force that may be driving changes in size is portability.

I believe that changes in size can be explained primarily by the tourist’s need for portability, a common explanation for miniaturization (e.g. Graburn 1979). Large shyrdaks are bulky and difficult for tourists to transport, as well as being relatively heavy,
a drawback when either carrying or shipping items home. Small shyrdaks, in contrast, can be rolled and strapped to backpacks, or folded and fit into a suitcase. These facts are commonly expressed both by tourists who are deciding on purchases and by the Altyn Ju’un staff.

This hypothesis is supported when we compare the contemporary shyrdak sample to the commodity shyrdak sample. While small, rectangular shyrdaks are almost five times more common than runners among commodity shyrdaks, there are twice as many runners as there are rectangular throw rugs among the contemporary shyrdak sample. Because of their dimensions, a rolled or folded runner will take up much more space than a rectangular rug of the same width, making them less attractive to tourists. These size restraints are not present when making shyrdaks for modern Kyrgyz homes. This shows that portability is driving change in size within the commodity shyrdak sample.

It is hard to determine whether the use of smaller shyrdaks in Kyrgyz homes has been introduced as a result of this innovation that derives from tourist needs, or if the concept of throw rugs and runners originates from the adoption of modern housing and exposure to Russian decorating. In modern Kyrgyz homes, many of the spaces that require additional floor coverage match the dimensions of runners, such as hallways and the margins of rooms. The floor plan of round yurts did not result in uncovered spaces with these kinds of dimensions; yurts do not have hallways. The term used for runners (padushka) is a Russian word, which might indicate that the use of runners began as a response to European-style housing. If this is indeed the case, I would expect to see the same ratio of runners to rectangular throw rugs in the heirloom sample as is present in the contemporary sample, since the oldest of the heirloom shyrdaks was 70-80 years, and
most nomadic Kyrgyz were settled by the Soviets by the end of the 1930s. The numbers of runners and rectangular throw rugs among the heirloom sample, however, are virtually identical. Since both styles are placed in high-traffic areas, there should not be a bias in which size of heirloom throw rugs survived. While it is possible that the small sample size is responsible for the difference in ratios, I think that it is more likely that the production of both types of small *shyrdaks* has increased in response to the demand for smaller souvenirs, and that the difference in ratios of rectangular rugs to runners within the contemporary and commodity samples reflects the different needs of tourists and Kyrgyz homeowners.

**Color Use**

Bunn states that the most common color combinations in the past were red/white, brown/white, red/blue, and brown/orange, with red/green becoming more popular recently (1996:79). As was argued earlier, color is an important aspect of aesthetics, and color preferences should impact sales strongly. As a result, a departure from heirloom color combinations in the commodity sample would indicate a strong influence from tourists, whereas similar color combinations between heirloom and contemporary samples would indicate the maintenance of Kyrgyz aesthetic preferences. The data from my samples (see Figure 7.3) clearly indicate that the kinds of colors most commonly used in commodity *shyrdaks* are very different from the colors used in heirloom *shyrdaks*. There are fifty-four different two-color combinations used among the commodity *shyrdaks*, and only thirteen different combinations used in each of the non-commodity *shyrdak* groups. Also, the colors used in commodity and non-commodity
Figure 7.3: Top 5 Color Combinations

Commodity Shyrdaks (N=159)

Heirloom Shyrdaks (N=97)

Contemporary Shyrdaks (N=61)
carpets are very different: the most popular combinations for tourist *shyrdaks* are colors of undyed wool, but occurrences of undyed wool use in heirloom *shyrdaks* are very rare (see Appendix B). Also, 8 percent of commodity *shyrdaks* sampled are the pastel colors that are associated with plant dyes. When this is added to the 44 percent of *shyrdaks* that were simply made from undyed wool, this indicates a high percentage of *shyrdaks* with “natural” coloring in the commodity *shyrdak* sample, a reflection of Euroamerican conceptions of authenticity (McGuckin 1997).

The most popular color combination in heirloom *shyrdaks* is red/green, a combination that EuroamERICANS associate with Christmas. Only 3.3 percent of *shyrdaks* in the commodity sample used this color combination (see Appendix C). The second most common heirloom *shyrdak* combination is red/dark blue, used in only 2 percent of the commodity sample, and the combinations pink/green, and pink/light blue (often turquoise) make up only 1 percent each of the commodity sample. By comparison, the commodity *shyrdaks* and the heirloom *shyrdaks* sampled are very similar in terms of color combinations used. There was only one contemporary *shyrdak* made exclusively with undyed wool, and no contemporary *shyrdaks* made using pastel colors. It is difficult to tell whether the light coloring in many of the oldest heirloom *shyrdaks* is the result of fading or reflects the original colors of the felt. Also, while the ranked order is not identical, red/green, red/dark blue, light blue/pink and dark blue/pink still encompass the top four categories in both heirloom and contemporary *shyrdaks*. I believe that this indicates that Kyrgyz women are able to maintain two different sets of aesthetic criteria for *shyrdaks*: those that sell better, and those that reflect their own color aesthetics. This is akin to the observations, already discussed, made by McGuckin (1997) regarding
multiple styles of production for Tibetan carpets depending on whether they were made
for export or for domestic use.

Another aspect of color is whether or not the color scheme of the shyrdak is
uniform. This can be judged based on whether, in shyrdaks that include both a central
field and a border, the colors of felt used in these two design fields match, and also
whether the je’ek (yarn) that is used in either of these design fields matches the felt used.
Shyrdaks that are constructed of individually-sewn chevrons typically do not have a
border, and shyrdaks that have an unequal number of colors between the central and
border design fields would not meet the criteria for uniformity of felt color, so this
criterion can only be calculated for a subsample of shyrdaks in each category (see Table
7.2).

Out of the sample of 159 commodity shyrdaks, only 46 of these include both a
central design field and a border. In this sample, 91 percent of the commodity shyrdaks
have borders whose felt colors match those used in the center. Of the sample of
97 heirloom shyrdaks, 80 have borders, and only 59 percent of these have the same colors
in both the central field and the border. Of the 61 shyrdaks in the contemporary sample,
24 have borders, and 46 percent have borders and centers whose colors match. This
shows a simultaneous increase in matching among commodity shyrdaks, and a decrease
in matching within the contemporary sample. The dramatically increased color
consistency among commodity shyrdaks is a likely response to Western color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shyrdak Sample</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Border/center match (%)</th>
<th>Je’ek/center match (%)</th>
<th>Je’ek/border match (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commodity</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heirloom</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
preferences. However, there are no obvious explanations for the decrease of matching among contemporary shyrdaks sampled. Some possibilities include increased freedom to experiment with color, or greater use of scrap felt, rather than making new felts large enough to encompass both the central field and the border. It is also possible that the increase in matching among tourist shyrdaks has led to a need to mark Kyrgyz shyrdaks through their failure to match, but I have no clear evidence to support any of these hypotheses.

Another aspect of color is whether or not je’ek (yarn) matches the felt used, or if it is used in a contrasting color. One of my informants mentioned that she had been told to use je’ek that matched one of the colors of felt when making items for sale, as this was preferred by tourists. Because shyrdaks with more than two colors of felt in the central design field may use je’ek that matches one of the felt colors to outline a second and third color, only shyrdaks with no more than two colors of felt in the given design field are considered here. In the commodity shyrdak sample, 44 percent of shyrdaks have je’ek that matches the central design felt, and the same is true of 52 percent of the borders. Among heirloom shyrdaks, 53 percent have je’ek in a color that matches the center, and 45 percent have je’ek in the border that matches the felt. In the contemporary shyrdak sample, the je’ek matches only 27 percent of centers and 29 percent of borders. This seems to indicate that there is a new trend among contemporary shyrdaks to add emphasis by using je’ek in a contrasting color to outline the design. Again, all the reasons given above for increased diversity of felt colors may also apply to diverse je’ek colors.
Motif Use

According to one informant, the motifs that are used in shyrdaks are stylized representations of six different categories of objects: parts of the landscape, celestial forms, plants, animals, household objects, and people. Most women interviewed can identify the literal derivation of traditional motifs (e.g. kochkor muiuz, the spiral, represents ram’s horns), but not the symbolic meaning (e.g. ram’s horns symbolize wealth). While some informants believed that the symbolic meanings associated with various motifs were widely known in the past, others stated that only the oimochus (design specialists) knew the symbolism associated with large numbers of common designs. As a result, the meaning of designs is unknown to both shyrdak makers and buyers in most cases, and the abstract nature of the designs means that it is difficult for buyers to imbue the motifs with their own symbolism. This makes variation in motifs less affected by tourist preferences than it is by the total repertoire of the shyrdak maker or oimochu. Stephanie Bunn studied non-commodity shyrdak production in Kyrgyzstan in 1995, and she states that the sale of shyrdaks has caused both “the reduction of quality in designs” and “has also encouraged a ‘freezing’ of traditional designs” that are simply copied from published books or photographs (1996:82). Bunn emphasizes throughout her article that the oimochus (design specialists) of the past used “improvisatory techniques...developing each new felt pattern from a repertory of traditional motifs” (1996:82). If this was the case, we would expect to see a greater variety of motifs being used in the heirloom shyrdak sample than are used in the commodity shyrdak sample. This should also be true if the women who are now making commodity shyrdaks have a
Figure 7.4: Increasing Complexity of Shyrdak Motifs

Figure 7.5a: Distribution of Simple Motifs

Figure 7.5b: Distribution of Compound Motifs
smaller repertoire of motifs to draw from than the *oimochus* (design specialists) of the past.

The most basic motifs used in *shyrdaks* are used in specific combinations to make compound motifs, e.g., a *karga turmak* (crow’s foot) atop a *kochkor muiuz* (ram’s horns) creates the *jigit* (boy) motif. These compound motifs can then be placed at the four ends of a cruciform shape to create a *tabak* (literally, plate) design (see Figure 7.4). Because of the “nested’ nature of these motifs, basic elements, such as ram’s horns, were only coded if they were not part of a larger design.

As is obvious from the distributions (see Figures 7.5a, 7.5b and 7.5c), none of the motifs recorded as present among heirloom *shyrdaks* was completely absent from commodity *shyrdaks*, which contradicts Bunn’s observations about commodity *shyrdak* variation. In addition, there is no clear relationship among commodity, heirloom and contemporary *shyrdaks* samples in relation to motif usage. In some cases, when there is a difference in use between heirloom and commodity *shyrdaks*, the use of a certain motif in contemporary *shyrdaks* is similar in proportion to its use in heirloom *shyrdaks*, and in
other cases the proportion is closer to commodity shyrdaks. For some motifs, heirloom and commodity proportions are almost identical, but contemporary proportions may be either higher or lower than the others. Finally, some motifs have approximately equal proportions of use across all three samples.

However, if we group proportions of central motifs by complexity, a clearer picture emerges (see Figure 7.6). Among commodity shyrdaks, almost two-thirds of the motifs used were simple and only 12 percent were in the most complex category. Among the non-commodity shyrdak samples, however, simple motifs make up only about half of the total, while a quarter of the motifs used are complex tabak designs. This suggests that women making shyrdaks for tourists draw less complicated designs in order to simplify the production process and increase output. The fact that contemporary shyrdaks use more tabak designs and fewer compound motifs is related to differences in design layout, which will be covered in the next section.

There is also the consideration of variation among the motifs used for frames and borders (see Appendix B). In some cases, running versions of central field motifs are
Figure 7.7a: Frame 1 Motifs by Type

Figure 7.7b: Frame 2 Motifs by Type

Figure 7.7c: Frame 3 Motifs by Type
used, and in other cases the motifs are unique to these design fields. When looking at the motifs used in Frame design fields (see Figures 7.7a, 7.7b and 7.7c), we can see that the bychak uchu design is the most common across all three sample groups. Sometimes frames will be represented by only one half of the bychak uchu design, or they may be a solid-colored band of felt with a zig-zag of shyryk (quilting) sewn to simulate the bychak uchu motif. Commodity shyrdaks are slightly more likely to use a motif not coded for Frame 1 (which includes solid-colored frames without any motif), and heirloom and contemporary shyrdaks show greater variation of motifs in Frame 3, but otherwise all three groups show little difference in their distributions. The variation in motifs utilized within Border design fields, however, is significant (see Figure 7.8). There are strong differences between heirloom shyrdaks, which utilize primarily arka muiuz and jigit motifs, and commodity shyrdaks, which incorporate large numbers of kochkor muiuz motifs. contemporary shyrdaks’ motif distribution tends to follow that of heirloom shyrdaks, but in some cases it is closer to commodity shyrdaks (e.g. proportion of
shyrdaks using ko’okor and kush kanat motifs), and on other cases it is unique (e.g. use of acha bakan).

So, while we can classify differences in the complexity of motifs used in commodity and non-commodity shyrdaks, the distributions of the motifs themselves do not clearly divide the samples along these lines. contemporary shyrdaks are in some ways more similar to heirloom than to commodity shyrdaks, but overall the three groups are unique in their use of motifs when studied across all design fields.

**Design Layout**

There are several aspects of how a shyrdak’s design is laid out that affect the usage of motifs. On the largest scale is the compositional layout. In her research on Kyrgyz pile carpets, Klavdiya Antipina identified nine different design layouts (Akmoldoeva 2002:220-222), some of which correspond with shyrdak layouts. Bunn (1996) also identifies several general layouts, and I use her descriptions as a guideline for my own classifications, explained below.

**Symmetry:** a design or designs that are bilaterally symmetrical are placed in the central field of the shyrdak (see Figure 7.9).

**Positive/Negative:** two small pieces of felt are used to construct the central field, so that the positive and negative of the same design are sewn side-by-side (see Figure 7.10).
Figure 7.9: Symmetrical layout (Tuttle 2004)

Figure 7.10: Positive/negative layout (Tuttle 2004)
Figure 7.11a: Rhomboid layout (Tuttle 2004)

Figure 7.11b: Rhomboid layout (Tuttle 2004)
Figure 7.12: Lattice layout (Tuttle 2004)

Figure 7.13: Mosaic layout (Tuttle 2004)
**Rhomboid:** the entire design field is constructed of individual diamonds, or rhomboids, that are sewn together. Anywhere from two to four rhomboids in a single row may be surrounded by a border and frames, or the entire shyrdak may be made of multiple rows of rhomboids without a border (see Figure 7.11a and b).

**Lattice:** the motifs filling the central design field are constructed so that they join in a repeating pattern, but they are cut into a single piece of felt (see Figure 7.12).

**Mosaic:** in a few cases, shyrdaks were constructed of small, geometric pieces of felt assembled like mosaic tiles (see Figure 7.13).

As you can see in Figure 7.14, the majority of commodity shyrdaks have symmetrical layout, heirloom shyrdaks have primarily positive/negative layouts, and among contemporary shyrdaks rhomboids are the most common layout. I believe that heirloom shyrdaks tend to use the positive/negative layout partly because it uses felt efficiently, combining all pieces into a single shyrdak. commodity shyrdaks likely favor symmetrical layouts because the majority of them are very small, with minimal design space. Also, this is an efficient way to use smaller pieces of felt, as the same parsimony
is used as in the positive/negative shyrdaks, but in this case two small shyrdaks are made instead of one larger one. Finally, there are many reasons that could explain why contemporary shyrdaks are most often rhomboidal, including the ability to use smaller scraps of felt, the modular nature of construction, and portability of individual pieces during the first stage of sewing. I witnessed a contemporary shyrdak of this type being made by two neighbors in cooperation; each woman was able to sew half of the rhomboids together in her own home during her free time, rather than needing to arrange times to meet and work on a single, larger shyrdak together.

A second variable to consider when studying shyrdak layout is the presence or absence of individual design fields (see Figures 4.1, 7.15). Certain layouts require different combinations of design fields – for example, a shyrdak made entirely of rhomboids will often consist of simply a central field with frames 1 and 2. Lattice layouts, however, will never use a frame 1, but usually incorporate both a border and frames 2 and 3.

Another variable is the consistency of motifs used within rhomboid layouts. Because each rhomboid is cut and sewn separately, there can be a variety of motifs in different rhomboids, or there may me a single repeated motif with only color variation from one rhomboid to the next. Among both samples of non-commodity shyrdaks, approximately 40 percent of shyrdaks use a single, repeated motif, while 60 percent incorporate at least 2 different motifs. Among the commodity shyrdaks, however, the ratio shifts to 20 percent with a single motif, and 80 percent with multiple motifs. The reason for this difference is unknown.
Virtually all shyrdaks, regardless of size or layout, include a Central design field and a Frame 2. Over 80 percent of heirloom shyrdaks also include a border, while only 29 percent of commodity shyrdaks and less than 50 percent of contemporary shyrdaks have borders. The low number of borders among the contemporary sample can be explained by the high numbers (43 percent) of rhomboid layouts. Among commodity shyrdaks, however, not including a border appears to be a strategy both for miniaturizing shyrdaks and possibly for simplifying the production process. This would lead to intensified production and larger profits if the same area can be produced more quickly.

Two more aspects of layout are border construction and number of designs in the central field (see Figure 7.16 and 7.17). When looking at number of central designs, the contemporary shyrdak sample tends to be more like the heirloom sample. However, border construction does not follow this trend, and in this case there are distinct differences between all three sample groups.

This, and the above examples, contradict the hypothesis that shyrdak-making traditions are being perfectly preserved within the contemporary shyrdak group. Women
making shyrdaks for domestic use today are obviously not producing shyrdaks that are identical to the ones their mothers made, or even to those they made for themselves before beginning to produce shyrdaks for sale. In addition, there is no evidence that commodity shyrdaks are any more uniform than heirloom shyrdaks: they utilize a greater variety of color combinations, and a similar array of motifs, although in differing proportions. There does, however, appear to be less variability in design layout characteristics, as evidenced by Figures 7.14-7.17. The dominance of a single variable in each of these cases, such as number of designs and symmetrical layout, relate to the need to miniaturize commodity shyrdaks for the sake of portability, which reduces design space. I would argue that the use of new color combinations and the development of novel ways to utilize design fields (e.g. solid frames) shows that commodity shyrdaks are not becoming standardized, even though the full range of layouts may not be possible due to size constraints.
CHAPTER EIGHT
INTERVIEW INTERPRETATION

Interviews

I interviewed 24 women aged 27 to 87 with the aid of an interpreter regarding their experiences in learning and teaching *shyrdak* production. Not all informants were asked the exact same questions, as the first several interviews were done without the aid of an interpreter. When a question has been asked of a subgroup of informants, I have indicated the total number of informants asked.

Most women reported assisting their female relatives with *shyrdak* production as young girls, but 25 was the average age at which women made their first *shyrdak* on their own (see Table 8.1). There appears to be some variation across age groups when we look at the age when a woman made her first *shyrdak* (“average age started”), which could be indicative of historical trends. During nomadic times, women would presumably have made their first *shyrdak* at a younger age, since marriages usually occurred at a young age. During and after the Soviet period, marriages were delayed for the sake of education and careers, delaying the time at which a woman made her first *shyrdak* for herself. I would expect these historical trends to manifest themselves as an inverse relationship between the age of the informant and the age at which she made her first *shyrdak*. So the fact that the oldest age group has a mean of 30, while the youngest group has a mean age of 17, casts doubt on this explanation. In addition, it is difficult to be sure how each woman defines making her first *shyrdak* “on her own,” as *shyrdak* making is almost never a sole venture. Different women may have interpreted this question to mean the
age at which they first assisted with a shyrdak intended for themselves, with their mothers organizing the work, while others may have interpreted it as meaning the age at which they initiated their first shyrdak and controlled its production. However, the very small sample sizes for each age group are the most likely source of this variation. Using Student’s T due to the small sample size, it can be calculated to a 95 percent confidence level that the mean age of the population of women upon making their first shyrdak is between 21.1 and 28.9 years, a wide range that indicates the possible inaccuracy of our sample mean.

63 percent of women reported learning to make shyrdaks from a close female relative, such as their mother, mother-in-law or grandmother, and this is consistent with historical patterns for learning as reported by informants. 34 percent reported learning on their own. The fact that observation and peripheral participation by young girls takes place within a community of practicing shyrdak makers in the home may explain the large percentage of informants who considered themselves to be “self-taught.” These women usually explained that they had learned to make shyrdaks by watching their mothers, mothers-in-law, or grandmothers. This characterization of learning is consistent with the legitimate peripheral participation style of learning described above. I had one

<table>
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<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Avg. age started</th>
<th>0-10 shyrs</th>
<th>11-20 shyrs</th>
<th>Over 20 shyrs</th>
<th>Taught by close relative</th>
<th>Taught self</th>
<th>Taught by other</th>
<th>Has taught others</th>
<th>Has taught friend/neighbor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
pair of informants who were mother and daughter, and while the mother indicated that she had taught her daughter to sew shyrdaks, the daughter characterized her learning as self-taught, no doubt due to the indirect nature of the teaching process. However, an unexpected 13 percent of informants reported learning from someone other than a close relative. In addition, of the 88 percent of women who reported having taught someone else to make shyrdaks, over half listed a friend or neighbor among their students. This highlights a current trend where women are learning from peers as well as older relatives. This may also indicate that some women are learning to make shyrdaks at a later age when their mothers are no longer available to teach them, or that women whose relatives no longer know how to construct shyrdaks are going to friends and neighbors to learn. 

88 percent of the 18 women asked drew their own shyrdak designs, and only 22 percent of those had drawn designs for others (see Table 8.2). This indicates that currently many women are making shyrdaks without the help of design specialists. Two of my key informants, who are oimochus, are now at the center of shyrdak-making groups in their villages. They are teaching larger numbers of women how to draw at least a few designs on their own, instead of drawing designs for these women.

Table 8.2: Motif Knowledge and Drawing Ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Knows motif names</th>
<th>Avg. # of names</th>
<th>Range of names</th>
<th>Draws Own Designs</th>
<th>Draws for Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0-18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>mean = 4.54</td>
<td>mean = 10</td>
<td>16 (N = 18)</td>
<td>4 (N = 18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most commonly cited names (cited by 20 percent or more of informants) had a 68 percent average agreement rate (see Table 8.3). However, agreement varied widely; some motifs were consistently given the same name by all informants (tabak and jurok), while the most common name (kiyal) appeared to be a “catchall” term, as each informant applied this name to a different motif. This would seem to indicate that, while more women are learning to draw their own designs, motif names are not widely known or consistently defined. This indicates that symbolic knowledge is not necessarily included in the learning process, even when the instructor is an oimochu.
Another aspect of the “talent” than many oimochu are believed to possess with regards to drawing shyrdaks is a supernatural knowledge, as is described by Bunn (1996). One of my informants expressed that she was possessed of this kind of knowledge, and that she drew designs for many women. This oimochu (I will call her Laila) was commissioned to make a shyrdak for me. When I met her, she told me,

I can tell from how I began to make your shyrdak that you have a very good temper. If I begin a shyrdak, and there are many problems, then I know that that person has a very bad temper. But when I began your shyrdak, it was very easy and everything went smoothly. [personal communication, 7/25/04]

However, despite her gift for drawing and “second sight,” Laila knew very few names of motifs, and stated that while she never forgot one of her designs, she sometimes forgot the meaning associated with it. Generally, she drew shyrdak designs based on her inspiration, rather than on a calculated knowledge of the symbolism appropriate for a particular individual or occasion. One reason for her lack of symbolic knowledge may have been that she claimed to have learned shyrdak making by watching her grandmother. This may indicate that she was mostly a self-learner, and never had the opportunity to learn the meaning of motifs from another oimochu. It may also indicate that symbolic meanings were not as consistent among oimochus in the past as many women now believe, and were based on personal inspiration.

The low levels of agreement and the range of motif name knowledge point to the fact that name usage and symbolism may not have been consistent across the whole population in the past. Different regions may have used different names and attached differing meanings to the same motifs, or there may have been regional variations in
motifs as well. For example, nearly all women agreed that a running pattern of spirals facing the same direction was called *it kuiruk* (dog’s tail). However, one informant, who had grown up on Lake Issyk-Kul, said that this design was called *kol tolkonu* (lake waves). When asked, she acknowledged that *it kuiruk* was another name for the design. Similarly, Bunn’s informants near Lake Issyk-Kul stated that the red and blue in *shyrdaks* represented the red earth of the mountains and the blue of the lake (1996:79), while one informant of mine in Naryn stated that red represented the people’s blood, and blue represented the sky. Whether variations in symbolism were personal or regional is difficult to ascertain, but several informants insisted that each woman did not invent her own symbolism, and that the meanings of the designs were consistent in the past. It is possible either that previously universal symbolic knowledge began to fragment as production of *shyrdaks* waned during the Soviet period, or that a myth of unified Kyrgyz culture was developed under communism and symbolism was either regionally or individually determined during the pre-Soviet period. Either way, at this point, it appears that women who are learning the technical aspects of *shyrdak* making are not learning the semiotic aspects at the same time, and this is one aspect of *shyrdak* knowledge that does appear to be in danger of being lost.
CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Mari Lyn Salvador (1976) described the art of mola making among the Cuna Indians in Panama. Molas are the reverse-appliqued panels on women’s blouses that were developed as a part of traditional dress once ready-made fabric was available through trade from Spain. Salvador describes how the popularity of the traditional outfit had begun to wane by the mid-1970s, stating that, “Generally, traditional women wear the whole outfit, and women who have changed to modern dress rarely wear any of it” (1976:172). However, Peace Corps Volunteers in the country at that time had started a sewing cooperative, where new items of European-style clothing were being made with small pieces in mola work integrated into the design. Salvador ends her article by writing, “The most significant effect of the Coop has been that women who formerly did not make molas are now making them and incorporating them into their modern dress” (1976:181).

I believe that a similar process is taking place in Kyrgyzstan as a result of the interest in shyrdaks and other Kyrgyz arts/handicrafts by tourists. As shown above, the shyrdaks being produced for women’s homes today look very different from those being produced for tourists, but they are also not identical to the shyrdaks made by these women’s mothers or grandmothers. The shyrdaks made for tourists are not more homogeneous than those made for women’s homes, although there are distinct differences in size, layout, color combinations, and the proportions of different motifs used in commodity and non-commodity shyrdaks. Most of the changes made to commodity shyrdaks appear to be a result of miniaturization, caused by the need for
backpackers and low-budget travelers to carry all of their belongings easily, although some are in response to Western color preferences, or to simplify production processes. On the whole, however, the commodity *shyrdaks* located at the Altyn Ju’un store showed little evidence of a lowering of quality, and no evidence that a standardized form was being developed.

Rather than causing the demise of Kyrgyz cultural practices, I believe that tourism in Ak To’o is actually helping to reinforce the continuation of Kyrgyz *shyrdak*-making, or possibly a revival of *shyrdak* construction knowledge. While assembly-line production has been introduced by other NGOs and handicrafts groups, the structure of Altyn Ju’un allows members to maintain previous small-scale, family-based production practices. It also allows its members the freedom to experiment with innovations in their *shyrdaks*, combining “traditional” motifs with novel color combinations and design layout details. In this way, the production of commodity *shyrdaks* may act as a “laboratory” for women to try new techniques, which they can then choose to incorporate into the *shyrdaks* they produce domestically. This may explain the large number of runners among the contemporary *shyrdaks* sampled; while yurts do not have hallways, modern homes do, and women are utilizing commodity-inspired innovations that serve a functional purpose domestically. As another example, one informant was planning to construct a large, round *shyrdak* to fit the floor-plan of her yurt. This is an extension of the small, round area-rugs made for tourists, but applied to a more “traditional” housing style.

In addition, women who did not have the opportunity to learn *shyrdak*-making from their relatives are now learning from friends and neighbors, due to the financial
incentive of selling commodity *shyrdaks*. One woman I met was in her mid-forties and was in the process of making her first *shyrdak*, which she intended to sell. Once women have developed the knowledge to make commodity *shyrdaks*, they are likely to make *shyrdaks* for themselves, and they are able to pass these skills on to their daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters, as well as other relatives, neighbors and friends.

This indicates that the mechanism for introducing new members to the community of practice is changing, and this also affects the demography of the community. Changes as simple as an increase in older peripheral members and their more egalitarian relationship to core members may have effects upon the community. This change may affect the rate at which innovations are accepted by the community, as well as which innovations become part of the core practice. Individual members always have the opportunity to influence the practice of all community members, but if the relationships within the community do not include the familial and age hierarchies of the past, peripheral members may be freer to innovate than they were previously. This could potentially lead to more rapid change within the body of practice shared by the community.

Because *shyrdak* making is taught within a community of practice, it continues to be a dynamic component of Kyrgyz culture, where traditions and innovations are interwoven, ensuring the continuing development of this cultural practice. The biggest concern is to maintain the symbolic knowledge held by the living *oimochus*, as this is one part of Kyrgyz cultural practice which could easily be lost. However, if a new generation of *oimochus* assigns their own meanings to the age-old motifs they have learned, this too will be an example of how the women of Kyrgyzstan continue to reinvent their traditions.
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Ivory, Carol S.


Jolly, Margaret


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Kopytoff, Igor


Kreindler, Isabelle

Krystal, Matthew


Kumanëv, V. A.


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Romalis, Sheila


Salvador, Mari Lyn

Steiner, Christopher B.


Straight, Bilinda


Thomas, Nicholas


Tuttle, Tiffany

Wilkinson-Weber, Clare M.


Willink, R. S. and P. G. Zalbrod


Wood, Warner W.


Zerner, Charles

APPENDIX
## APPENDIX A

### CODING VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Variable description and variable values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provenance Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID#</td>
<td><strong>Unique shyrdak identification number.</strong> Made of date photograph was taken (MDDYY), 2-letter code for where photo was taken (Ak=Altyn Kol showroom, Ka=Kara Suu, Td=Tengdik, Is=Issakeev, Kk=Kochkor) and 3-number code indicating order in which photo was taken (001, 002, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHYRORIG</td>
<td><strong>Town where shyrdak was made (Altyn Kol shyrdaks) or photographed.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAKBIRTH</td>
<td><strong>Oblast where shyrdak maker was born.</strong> 0=unknown, 1=Naryn, 2=Issyk-Kul, 3=Osh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLETE</td>
<td><strong>Stage of completion.</strong> 0=unfinished, 1=finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHYRUSE</td>
<td><strong>Intended use of the shyrdak.</strong> 1=home use, 2=made for sale, 3=intended as future gift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHYRAGE</td>
<td><strong>Age provided for shyrdak.</strong> Uk=unknown, 50=unfinished, 1=1-10 years, 2=11-20 years, 3=21-30 years, 4=31-40 years, 5=41-50 years, 6=51-60 years, 7=over 60 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHYRDIM</td>
<td><strong>Rough dimensions of the shyrdak.</strong> 1=rectangular large (&lt; approx. 54&quot; long), 2=square large, 3=rectangular small (&gt; approx. 54&quot; long), 4=runner (length more than 2x width), 5=round or oval throw rug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHYRSHYR</td>
<td><strong>Type of shyryk quilting used.</strong> 0=absent, 1=single line, 2=single line with blank areas, 3=single line with contour fill, 4=single line with decorative fill 5=mixed (presence/absence), 50=shyrdak incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMOTNUM</td>
<td><strong>Number of motifs found in central design field.</strong> 1=single motif (even if two motifs reflected), 2=doubled motif (duplicated with same orientation), 3=triple motif, 4=quadruple motif, 5=multiple rows, 6=other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAYOUT</td>
<td><strong>Layout of Central design field.</strong> 1=simple symmetry, 2=positive/negative panels, 3=individually sewn chevrons, 4=lattice, 5=mosaic tiles, 6=other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCORNERS</td>
<td><strong>Presence of additional motifs filling in the corners or edges of Central design field.</strong> 0=absent, 1=present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVARIATN</td>
<td><strong>Variation found in repeating chevrons of Central design field.</strong> 0=not chevron design, 1=single repeated motif, 2=multiple motifs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEXTEND</td>
<td><strong>Additional strips of design found on either end of the Central design field.</strong> 0=absent, 1=one end only, 2=both ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAME1</td>
<td><strong>Thin frame outlining individual elements within the Central design field.</strong> 50=shyrdak incomplete, 0=absent, 1=present, 2=unbounded, 3=bounded solid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| FRAME2 | Thin frame outlining entire Central design field.  
| 50=shyrdak incomplete, 0=absent, 1=present, 2=unbounded, 3=bounded solid |
| BLAYOUT | Layout of the border panels.  50=shyrdak incomplete, 0=absent, 1=positive/negative L-shapes, 2=positive/negative strips, 3= single piece, 4=C-shape, 5=unknown |
| BEVILEYE | A color shift in a block of felt found near the corner of the Border design field.  0=absent, 1=present. |
| CBMATCH | Uniformity of color combinations in Central and Border design fields.  1=matching, 2=different |
| FRAME3 | Thin frame outlining entire shyrdak.  50=shyrdak incomplete, 0=absent, 1=present, 2=unbounded, 3=bounded solid |

**Color Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Variable description and variable values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCOLOR1 to N</td>
<td>Colors in Central design field, starting from outside edge.  See color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJEEK1 to N</td>
<td>Colors of jeek in the Central design field.  See Color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1COLOR1 to N</td>
<td>Colors in Frame 1 design field, starting from outside edge.  See color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1JEEK1 to N</td>
<td>Colors of the jeek in Frame 1 design field.  See Color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2COLOR1 to N</td>
<td>Colors in Frame 2 design field, starting from outside edge.  See color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2JEEK1 to N</td>
<td>Colors of the jeek in Frame 2 design field.  See Color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCOLOR1 to N</td>
<td>Colors in Border design field, starting from outside edge.  See color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJEEK</td>
<td>Color of the jeek in Border design field.  See Color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3COLOR1 to N</td>
<td>Colors in Frame 3 design field, starting from outside edge.  See color code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3JEEK1 to N</td>
<td>Colors of the jeek in Frame 3 design field.  See Color code list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Motif Variables**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Code</th>
<th>Variable description and variable values</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CM1-CM30</td>
<td>Central design field motifs.  0=absent, see motif codebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1MOT</td>
<td>Frame 1 design field motif.  0=absent, see motif codebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2MOT</td>
<td>Frame 2 design field motif.  0=absent, see motif codebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMOT</td>
<td>Border design field motifs.  0=absent, see motif codebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3MOT</td>
<td>Frame 3 design field motif.  0=absent, see motif codebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Code List</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0=absent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1=red</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2=pink</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3=orange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4=yellow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5=green</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6=light blue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7=dark blue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8=purple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9=brown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10=black</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11=natural white</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12=natural dark grey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13=natural light grey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14=natural red</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15=natural black</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16=black and white</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17=natural brown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20=dogtooth technique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50=incomplete</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B
MOTIF CODEBOOK

Central Design Field Motifs

CM1 acha bakan
CM2 karga tyrmak
CM3 kochkor muiuz
CM4 kochkor muiuz 2
CM5 besh manja
CM6 ene kol
CM7 it kuiruk
CM8 jer
CM9 jogazyn
CM10 kokor
CM11 kush kanat
CM12 umai ene
CM13 akkuu
CM14 salbai
CM15 kyz
CM16 jurok
CM17 jigit
CM18 anar
CM19 bugu muiuz
CM20 arka muiuz
CM21 jigit tabak
CM22 kochkor tabak
CM23 kokor tabak
CM24 jurok tabak
CM25 besh manja tabak
CM26 kochkor-karga t.
CM27 karga tyrmak tabak
CM28 kyz tabak
CM29 ene kol tabak
CM30 ai tuik

Frame design field motifs

1=bychak uchu
2=bychak uchu 2
3=it kuiruk
4=it kuiruk 2
5=jogazyn
6=kulpukalit
7=kulpukalit 2
8=kochkor muiuz
Border design field motifs

BM1  acha bakan  BM8  ene kol
BM2  arka muiuz  BM9  jogazyn
BM3  kush kanat  BM10  jogazyn 2
BM4  karga kanat  BM11  kochkor muiuz
BM5  kokor  BM12  jurok
BM6  jigit border
BM7  kochkor-kokor
# APPENDIX C

## ALL COLOR COMBINATIONS BY TYPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Colors</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Heirloom</th>
<th>Colors</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Contemporary</th>
<th>Colors</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>13/15</td>
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<td>14.4</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14/15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>14/17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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